The Linkage Management Development Certificate Series

SESSION 1

Leadership

Featuring Phil Harkins

Introduction

Welcome to the opening session of *The Linkage Management Development Certificate Series*, *Leadership*. Phil Harkins the president and CEO of Linkage, Inc., will present this program. Dr. Harkins founded Linkage in 1988. Headquartered in Massachusetts, with 15 offices in the US and Europe, Linkage offers programs, products, consulting, and coaching services to cultivate high performance organizations.

In his own consulting and executive coaching work, Phil focuses on senior leaders and leadership teams. His clients include senior executives and teams at Prudential, Kraft, Ralston Purina, Morgan Stanley, American Express and other *Fortune* 500 companies worldwide. In addition, along with leadership expert Warren Bennis, Phil is co-chair of the Global Institute for Leadership Development, which has trained and developed over 4,000 leaders from around the world.

He has written several books, including his new book *Powerful Conversations: How High-Impact Leaders Communicate* (McGraw-Hill 1999). He has also authored over 20 articles for magazines and journals. Phil speaks frequently on leadership and coaching at public and in-house conferences, seminars, and programs around the globe.

Today's program will help you develop some of the following leadership competencies:

■ Global Institute Leadership Model's high impact competencies that include:

- Focused drive

- Emotional intelligence

- Trusted influence

- Conceptual thinking

- Systems thinking

■ How to have powerful conversations

During today's program Dr. Harkins will introduce the Global Institute's Leadership Model. He will demonstrate the significant connection between the Model's competencies, knowledge and skills and the ability to conduct powerful conversations. Complete the *Leadership Assessment Instrument* found in your Participant Materials to identify your leadership strengths and areas for development.

What you will learn

By participating in the Leadership program presented by Phil Harkins you will be able to:

■ Use the *Leadership Assessment Instrument* as a teaching and learning tool

■ Maximize your leadership strengths and improve your competencies utilizing the tools of Powerful Conversations

■ Increase your trust quotient as a leader through the discipline of using communication tools

■ Plan and manage conversations in fearful and difficult situations

Pre-presentation activities

■ Read selected portions of Chapters 1 and 2 of Phil Harkins new book, *Powerful Conversations: How High-Impact Leaders Communicate* (McGraw-Hill 1999). These Chapters are included in your Participant Materials on pages 30 – 58.

■ Complete the *Leadership Assessment Instrument™* (LAI) that appears in your Participant Materials beginning on page 62. *The Leadership Assessment Instrument*™ was researched and developed by Linkage Inc. in partnership with Dr. Warren Bennis.

   It focuses on the five personal characteristics, or competencies, essential to effective leadership, and on the five skills which leaders use to put these competencies into practice.

   Knowing your strengths and opportunities for development will help make today's presentation particularly relevant.

■ In your own words define each of the following terms or phrases. Phil will define and use these terms during the presentation. You will be asked to return to these terms following the presentation to review your responses and add to these concepts based on the information Phil presented.

   Competency_____

   _____

Focused drive _____

_____

Emotional intelligence_____

_____

Trusted influence _____

_____

Systems thinking _____

_____

Say/Do matrix_____

_____

Powerful Conversations _____

_____

The three C's of Powerful Conversations _____

_____

Advocacy and inquiry_____

_____

The Tower of Power _____

_____

During this program

■ **Participate!** Actively follow along by using these Participant Materials for your notes.

■ Submit questions to be addressed by Phil Harkins during the question and answer sessions. Phil will respond to questions after the first third of the program and again at the end of his presentation. To submit questions, complete either the fax form found on page 59 or call in when prompted during the program.

Today's program

Today's program presents the new manager/leader a competency profile that participants can use as a benchmark. Participants will engage in an action learning dialogue using proven communication skills and the discipline of Powerful Conversations to drive their high impact leadership style.

Participants will receive action steps and practice exercises for gaining new skills and competencies around Linkage's Leadership Development Assessment Profile.

The Global Institute Leadership Model™

The Global Institute's Leadership Model has three primary components: Competencies, Knowledge and Skills. Together they provide a powerful model for the personal characteristics effective leaders need, what they need to know and what they need to be able to do.

Phil will discuss the background of the Global Institute for Leadership Development and describe the research on which the model is based.

The Global Institute Leadership Model™

Competencies
- Focused Drive
- Emotional Intelligence
- Trusted Influence
- Conceptual Thinking
- Systems Thinking

Skills
- Change Management
- Coaching/Mentoring
- Communication
- Negotiation
- Problem Solving

Knowledge
- Marketing/Sales
- Running the Business
- Strategic Planning
- Human Capital
- Technology

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Manager

The Global Institutes Leadership Model describes the knowledge areas in which high impact, effective business managers need to be well informed. These areas include; marketing and sales, running the business (the operations side) strategic planning, human capital and technology.

The Leadership Model also identifies a set of skills an effective manager needs. These include change management, coaching and mentoring, communication, negotiation and problem solving.

The Global Institute Leadership Model™
Manager:
Knowledge and Skills

Knowledge
- Marketing/Sales
- Running the Business
- Strategic Planning
- Human Capital
- Technology

Skills
- Change Management
- Coaching/Mentoring
- Communication
- Negotiation
- Problem Solving

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Competencies

The Global Institute's Leadership Model identifies five competencies of the High Impact Leader. Competencies are those personal characteristics that are part of a person's personality and characteristic way of responding to people and situations. While some parts of the personal characteristics of all of us represent our innate natures, we can learn to be more effective in those areas that do not come naturally to us.

The competencies identified by the Global Institute's model include focused drive, emotional intelligence, trusted influence, conceptual thinking and systems thinking.

The Global Institute Leadership Model™

The High Impact Leader:
Competencies

Competencies
•Focused Drive
•Emotional Intelligence
•Trusted Influence
•Conceptual Thinking
•Systems Thinking

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The Leadership Components

Focused Drive

In this section of the program Dr. Harkins discusses the definitions of the Leadership Components. The first component he talks about is Focused Drive. This component is composed of two elements.

Focus: The ability to identify an important goal or vision and to channel efforts at specific targets that support that goal/vision.

Drive: The ability to persevere, sacrifice (when necessary), and expend high degrees of energy to reach high levels of performance

Emotional Intelligence

Recently, a great deal has been written about the concepts of emotional intelligence and its importance for effective leadership. The ability of a leader to know himself and to control his/her own emotions as well as the ability to be sensitive to and aware of the feelings and motivations of others has been shown to be a powerful asset for effective leadership.

The Leadership Components
Definitions

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Perception: The ability to read the emotions and thoughts of others through the use of insight and analytical skills

Emotional Maturity: The ability to master emotions and cope with stress in a way that instills confidence, motivates, and enhances group effectiveness

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Trusted Influence

As you will hear in Dr. Harkin's presentation, the ability to gain the trust of others and to influence them toward certain behaviors, are powerful competencies for high impact leaders. In more and more organizations, leaders lead not by their position of authority, but by gaining the trust of others and having the skills to influence their behavior.

Phil will discuss the two components of Trusted Influence, Commitment and Empowerment.

The Leadership Components
Definitions

TRUSTED INFLUENCE

Commitment: The ability to evoke trust from others by keeping commitments, adhering to high ethical standards and principles, and building shared goals/values

Empowerment: The ability to help others reach higher levels of performance through trust, delegation, participation, and coaching

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Conceptual Thinking

Today's leaders cannot rely on just being smart. They need to be able to see both the forest and the trees. As Stephen Covey notes in his work, leaders also have to have the ability to know that they are in the "right forest."

Here Phil discusses the two components of Conceptual Thinking, Innovation and Big Picture Thinking.

The Leadership Components
Definitions

CONCEPTUAL THINKING

Innovation: The ability to create/enhance ideas, products, and services that lead to bottom line success

Big Picture Thinking: The ability to see all of the forces, events, entities, and people involved in the situation at hand

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Systems Thinking

The High Impact Leader in today's complex and fast moving business environment must be able to understand how things work and how they are connected. She/he needs to be able to cut through the static and clarify what is happening and what needs to happen for people and organizations to be successful.

Phil Harkins will discuss the two components of Systems Thinking, Process Orientation and Mental Discipline.

The Leadership Components
Definitions

SYSTEMS THINKING

Process Orientation: The ability to increase overall learning and performance by designing, implementing, and/or connecting processes

Mental Discipline: The ability to sort through ambiguity and alternatives in a way that crystallizes and puts ideas into action

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Leadership Competencies

In this portion of the program Phil reviews the Leadership Competencies and relates them to the LAI that you completed for your Pre-presentation Materials. He also talks about how these competencies relate to having Powerful Conversations.

Leadership Competencies

Focused Drive	< Focus Drive
Emotional Intelligence	< Perception Emotional Maturity
Trusted Influence	< Commitment Empowerment
Conceptual Thinking	< Innovation Big Picture Thinking
Systems Thinking	< Process Orientation Mental Discipline

Leadership Power – The Say/Do Matrix

The link between High Impact Leaders and Powerful Conversations is in the relationship between the "say" and "do". While it is vitally important to have Powerful Conversations that clarify issues and develop openness and trust, if these Conversations are not followed up by actions, the trust and confidence developed will soon disappear.

In this part of the program Phil introduces the Say/Do Matrix and discusses how it is critically important to being seen as a High Impact Leader.
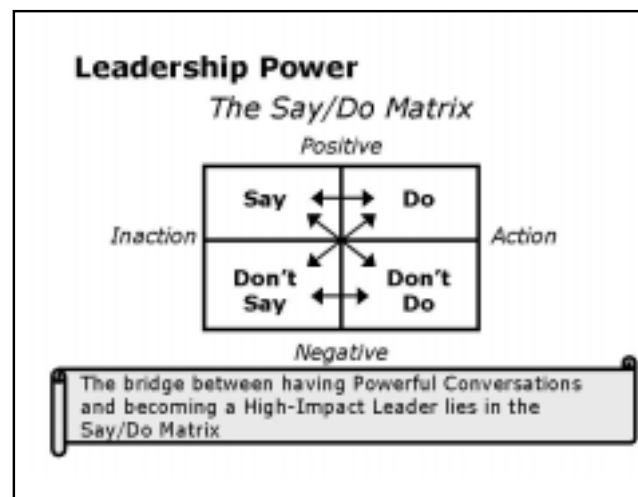
Best Conversation

In the slide below Phil describes a list of words that describes our best conversations. We have all had the experience of coming away from a wonderful conversation feeling invigorated and rewarded.

In this portion of the program Phil will discuss the attributes of these kinds of conversations.

IMPORTANT: Please do not turn to the next page until signaled by the presenter.

Best Conversation

- Happy
- Calm
- Honest
- True
- Committed
- Wishful
- Kind
- Just
- Loving
- Confidential
- Listening
- Bright

- Sensitive
- Delightful
- Action oriented
- Complete
- Clear
- Fair
- Results
- Great
- Believable
- Candid
- Symbiotic
- Trust

- Inspiring
- Caring
- Friendship
- Respect
- Connection
- Understanding
- Enthusiastic
- Energizing
- Emotional
- Intimate
- Openness
- Challenged

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Worst Conversation

We've just discussed the virtues and rewards of good conversations. In this part of the program Phil discusses the impact of the opposite kind of conversation, the kind that leaves us disheartened and enervated.

Phil will discuss the impact these kinds of conversations have on individuals and organizations. He will help show us how to engage in more positive kinds of interactions.
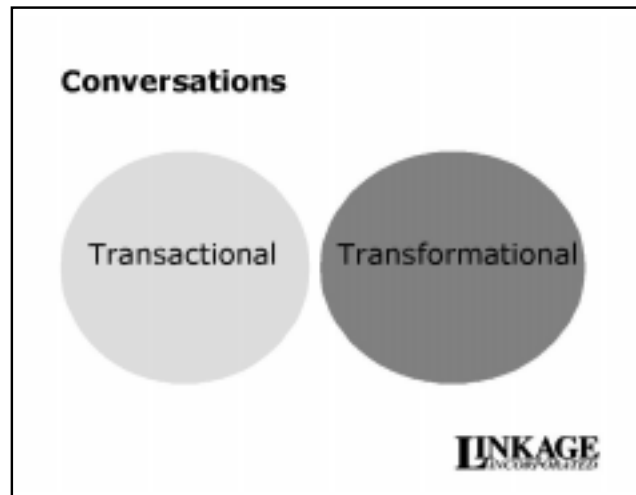
Worst Conversation

- Incomplete
- Rejection
- Angry
- In-Your-Face
- Insensitive
- Frustrated
- Unkind
- Unfocused
- Fiery/Red
- Anxious

- Ambiguous
- Fearful
- Bleak
- Sad
- Closed
- Dismal
- Loser
- Dishonest
- Broken
- Truncated

- Devastating
- Dominated
- Whining
- Hurtful
- Brick wall
- Separation
- Stressful
- Manipulated
- Exhausting
- Painful

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Conversations

Here Phil discusses two different kinds of conversations, Transactional and Transformational. In the Transactional conversation that characterizes many business interchanges, the emphasis is on getting things done. This is the agenda; these are the results we want.

In transformational conversations, change, learning and real commitment take place. These are not the kinds of conversations generally associated with business interchanges. Phil suggests that this may not be so.

Powerful conversations

In this portion of the program Dr. Harkins discusses the place where he believes Powerful Conversations take place – in the intersection of Transactional and Transformational conversation.

Powerful conversations involve shared feelings, ideas and beliefs. They also involve clear expressions of wants and needs, and at the end there are commitments made. So Powerful Conversations both get work done and result in change and learning.
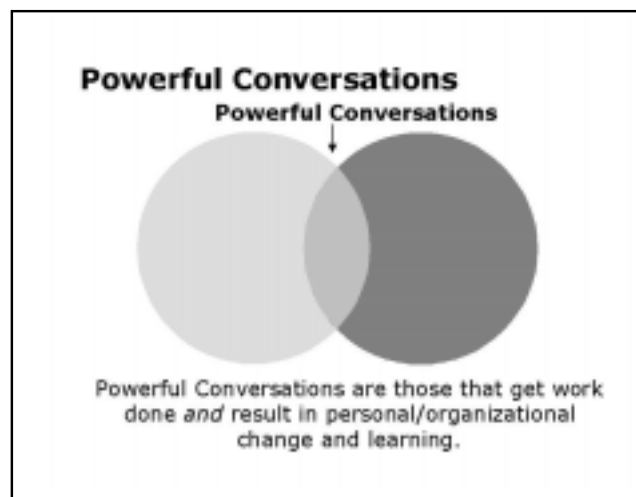
Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry

In this part of the discussion Dr. Harkins presents the issues of balancing our need to advocate for our own views with the need to ask questions and thoroughly understand the other person's point of view.

Very often in conversations we focus on advocating for our own positions. The quality of this advocacy is critical to developing mutual learning, one of the goals of Powerful Conversations.

Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry
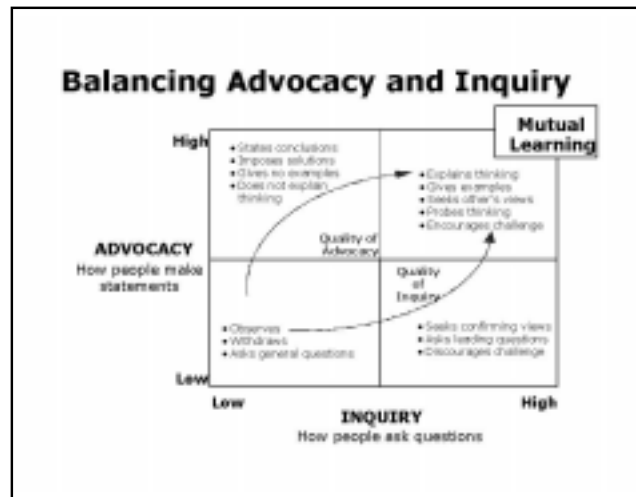
The Stages of a Powerful Conversation

Phil presents steps in the process of Powerful Conversations. He also discusses the critical success factors (CSF) that need to be present if each stage is to successfully lead to the next stage.

Phil describes the importance of fully completing one stage before you move on to the next. For example, skipping a thorough introduction might leave the conversation poorly grounded and not feeling open and candid. Sometimes it is necessary to return to a stage to complete or clarify that part of the conversation.

The Stages of a Powerful Conversation
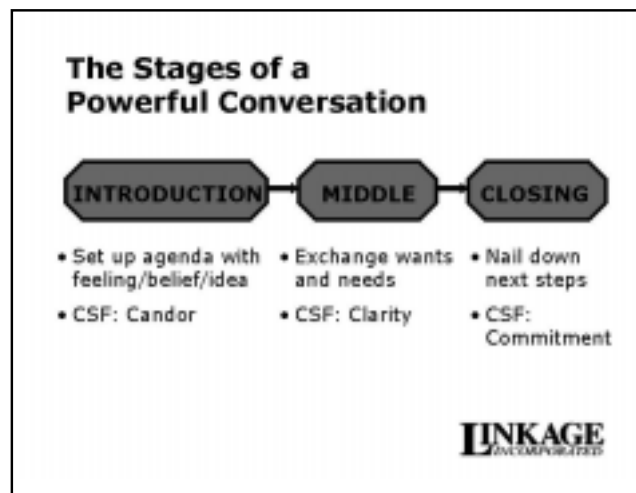
Stops Powerful Conversation

You will find below a list of those factors that often stop or prevent a Powerful Conversation from taking place. Any combination of these feelings and/or behaviors can shape the conversation in a way that will not result in the positive outcomes of Powerful Conversations.

Think about some of your recent conversations. How many of these attributes or behaviors did you display that kept the conversation from being powerful?

Stops Powerful Conversations

- Retribution
- Pride
- Saving Face
- Retaliation
- Mistrust
- Anger
- Frustration
- Rejection
- Not Caring
- Interruptions
- Ego

- Not Listening
- Apathy
- Tiredness
- Broken Down
- Tip Toeing
- Anxiousness
- Disloyalty
- Not Committed
- Other Focused
- Intimidation
- Lack of Time

- Fear
- Difference of Opinion
- Attitude
- Competition
- Change
- Trust
- Inexperience
- Inability to Compromise
- Miscommunication
- Close mindedness

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What stops Powerful Conversations

Phil discusses the most powerful feelings that prevent us from engaging in Powerful Conversations. Often we are fearful that our real feelings will come out and that we will make ourselves vulnerable to the other person in a conversation. We may fear a threat or an implied threat to our job or position if we are open and honest and say what we really want or need. Embarrassment about what we know, don't know or about saying the "wrong" thing can also prevent us from having useful and Powerful Conversations.

In this portion of the program Phil will discuss how being vulnerable and open about our wants and needs can enable Powerful Conversations. He will discuss several moving examples.
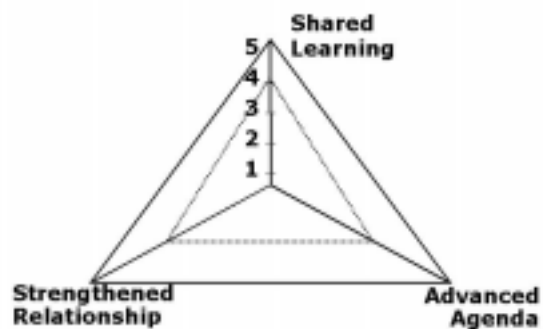
What Stops Powerful Conversations

- Fear

- Threat

- Embarrassment

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The measurements of a Powerful Conversation

The three positive outcomes of Powerful Conversations are Strengthened Relationships, Shared Learning and Advanced Agendas. When we engage in conversations that achieve all of these goals we benefit. Phil will discuss these positive attributes of Powerful Conversations and suggests a way to measure them.
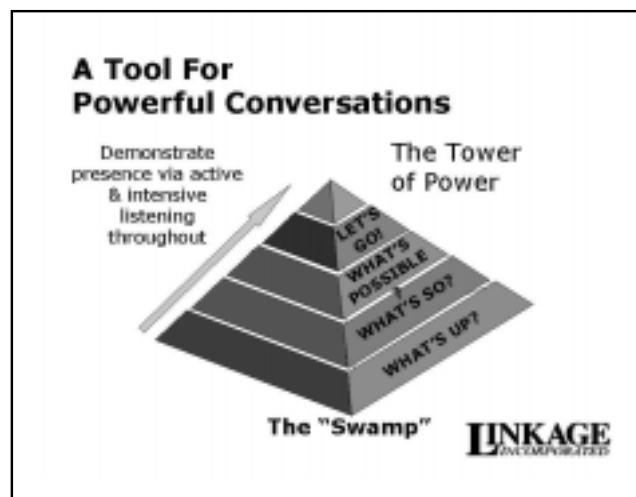
The Measurements of a Powerful Conversation

Shared Learning

5
4
3
2
1

Strengthened Relationship

Advanced Agenda

A tool for Powerful Conversations – The Tower of Power

Here Dr. Harkins presents a useful tool to help you learn how to engage in Powerful Conversations. One key to engaging in these conversations is to demonstrate your real presence through behaviors of active and intense listening. This kind of listening is the foundation on which the Tower of Power is constructed.

The Tower of Power helps to frame the process and give us the essence of what we want to accomplish at each stage of a Powerful Conversation.

How High Impact leaders build trust

High Impact leaders develop a solid foundation of trust through the three outputs of a Powerful Conversation: an advanced agenda, a deepened relationship and shared learning. Then leaders build upon that foundation by living up to the commitments that are the deliverables of the Powerful Conversation.

Phil discusses trust as a bank account that leaders can add to or take away from. In the following part of the program Phil discusses the ways that leaders build trust.

Lesson 1 – High Impact Leaders know and then leverage their competency profile

As part of your Pre-presentation work you were asked to complete the Leadership Assessment Instrument. Take it out and review your profile as Dr. Harkins proceeds through the next portion of the program.

Phil discusses how knowing your profile can help you identify areas to leverage as well as areas that need to be strengthened so that you are able to engage in Powerful Conversations.
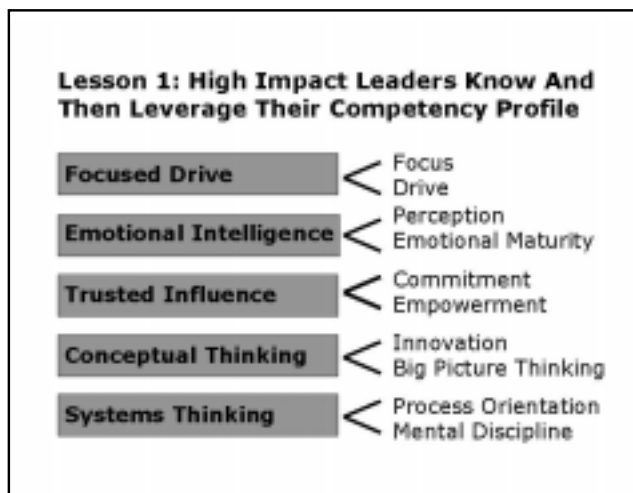
Sample Profile A

In the slide below you will see a sample profile from the *Leadership Assessment Instrument™.* Dr. Harkins will discuss the impact of this profile on the ability to conduct and engage in Powerful Conversations.

Compare this profile to your own. What similarities and differences do you see?

Is your profile one you think you share with other members of your team? What is the impact of conducting Powerful Conversations?
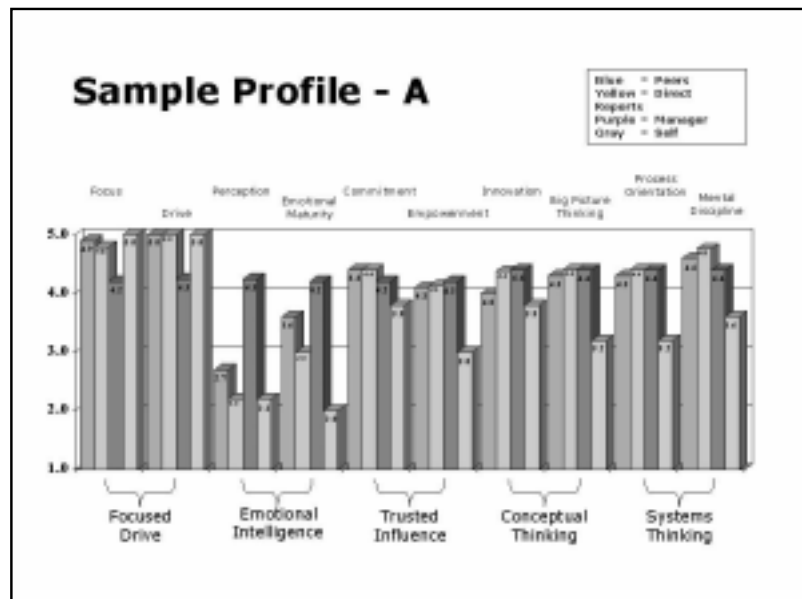
Lesson 2 - High Impact Leaders study other profiles
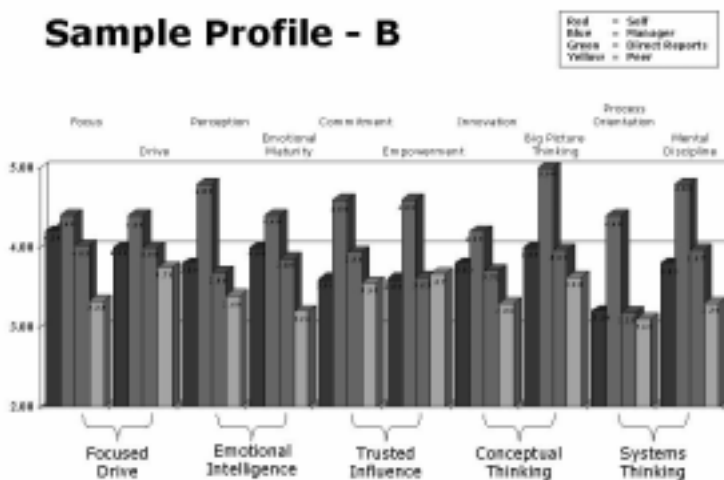
High Impact leaders benefit from being knowledgeable about the ways other kinds of profiles impact Powerful Conversations.

In the next several pages Dr. Harkins will review different profiles. He will discuss what kind of impact these sets of strengths and areas for development might have on conducting Powerful Conversations.

Sample Profile - B

Sample Profile - C

Sample Profile - D
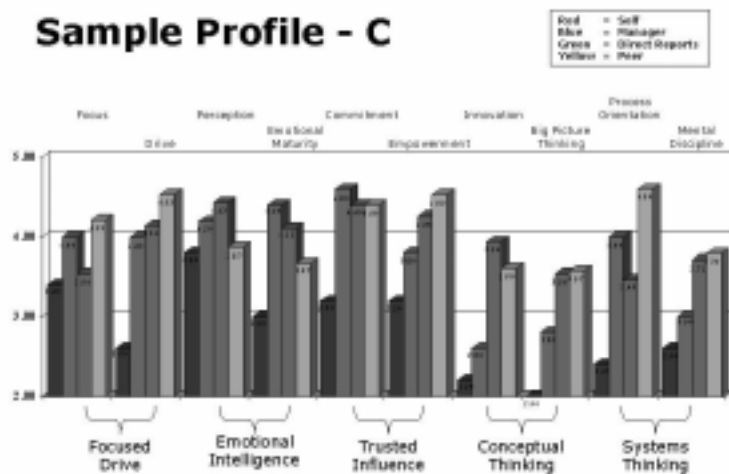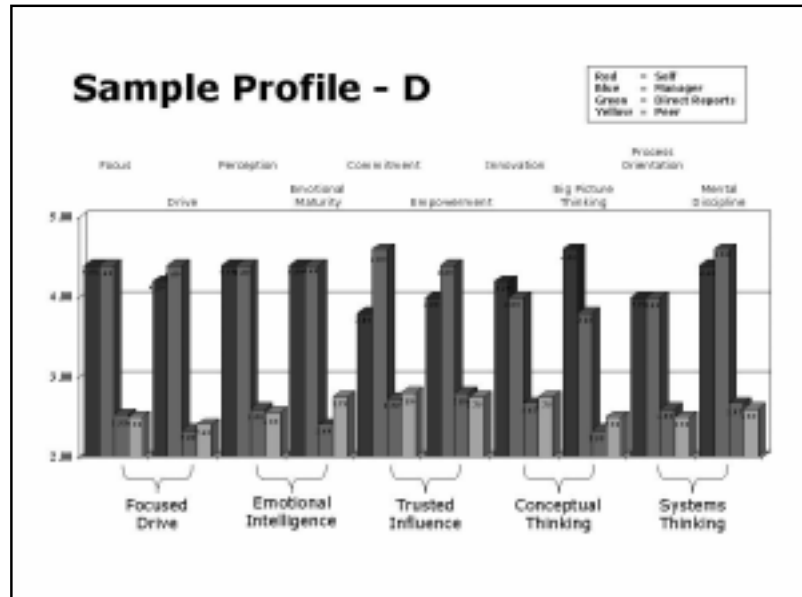
Lesson 3 - Practice consistent use of Powerful Conversations' Tools

Dr. Harkins reviews the three tools that he discussed in today's conversation: Three C's, the Critical Success Factors of Powerful Conversations (Candor, Clarity and Commitment); The Tower of Power, Three Measurements (shared learning, advanced agendas and strengthened relationships).

When you combine consistent use of these three tools you will be able to regularly engage in Powerful Conversations.

Lesson 3: Practice Consistent Use
Of Powerful Conversations Tools

- **Three C's**
- **Tower Of Power**
- **Three Measurements**

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The stages of a Powerful Conversation

Phil reviews the stages of a powerful conversation and discusses tips for the use of these stages in combination with the other tools presented.

The Stages of a
Powerful Conversation

INTRODUCTION → MIDDLE → CLOSING

- Set up agenda with feeling/belief/idea
- CSF: Candor

- Exchange wants and needs
- CSF: Clarity

- Nail down next steps
- CSF: Commitment

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The measurements of a Powerful Conversation

As part of his review Phil reminds you about the measurements of a Powerful Conversation. These are shared learning, strengthened relationships and advanced agendas.

Phil discusses this measurement in relationship with the other tools he is reviewing.

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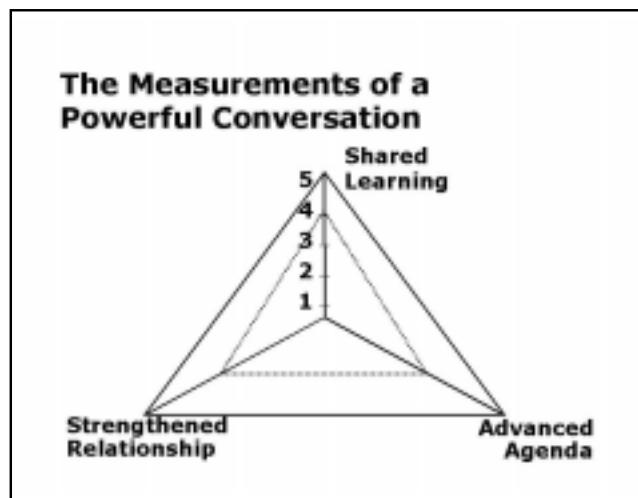
A tool for Powerful Conversations – The Tower of Power

Phil continues his review of the tools of Powerful Conversation with a discussion of the Tower of Power and how its use relates to the other tools.

A Tool For Powerful Conversations

Demonstrate presence via active & intensive listening throughout

The Tower of Power

LET'S GO!
WHAT'S POSSIBLE?
WHAT'S SO?
WHAT'S UP?

The "Swamp"

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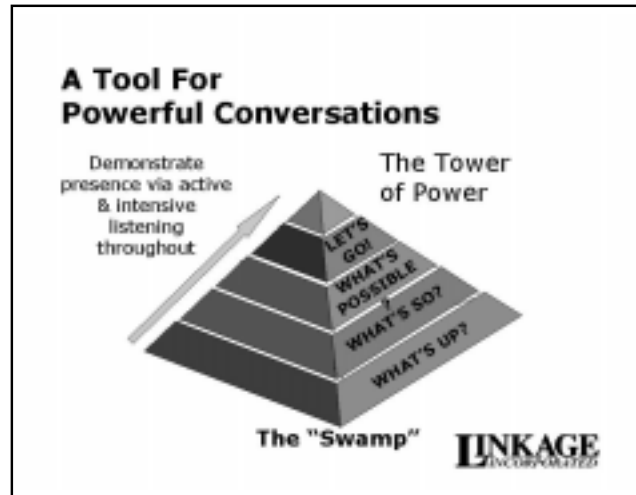
Lesson 4 - Leaders talk through the tough stuff

Unmentionables and untouchables often sit in the middle of the table like the "10 thousand pound gorilla." It is only when we tackle these tough issues and show our own vulnerabilities that we get what we want by giving others what they need.

Lesson 4: Leaders Talk Through The Tough Stuff

They get to the "reds" by being vulnerable

They get what they want by giving others what they need

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Lesson 5 - High Impact leaders create click

In this final portion of the program, Phil captures the essence of High Impact Leaders. These are people who know who they are and are able to help others identify what they want and need. Effective, High Impact Leaders work all of the agendas and win!

Lesson 5: High Impact Leaders Create Click

They know what they are about

They know what others want and need

They work all the agendas to win

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Wrap up

In this session, Phil Harkins presented the Global Institute 's Leadership model. He discussed the three components of the model: competencies, knowledge and skills. He discussed the knowledge and skills needed by managers and the competencies of High Impact Leaders. He also defined these competencies and showed how High Impact Leaders might enact them.

Following the discussion of the Leadership Model, Phil showed how leadership power is related to the Say/Do Matrix. The Say/Do Matrix provides the bridge between having powerful conversations and becoming a High Impact Leader.

In the next part of the program Phil discussed Powerful Conversations and gave us tools designed to help us engage in these kinds of conversations. These tools include a 3 Stage process for conducting Powerful Conversations. The stages are: *introduction*, setting up agendas; *middle*, exchange wants and needs; and *closing*, nailing down next steps. He identified critical success factors that include candor, clarity and commitment.

Phil demonstrated a measurement of Powerful Conversation that includes shared learning, strengthened relationships and finally advanced agendas.

The next tool Phil discussed was the Tower of Power. The Tower of Power sets out the steps- What's up, What's so, What's possible, and Let's go. He explained why these steps should be used in the order prescribed and affirmed that none should be skipped.

Finally, Phil showed how sample profiles of the Leadership Assessment Instrument related to success engaging in Powerful Conversations and become a High Impact Leader.

Question and answer session

■   If you are participating in the live presentation of this program, call in or fax your questions to Phil Harkins during the question and answer portion of the program. Use the fax question sheet on page 59.

■   If you are taking part in the encore presentation of this program, share your questions with the seminar coordinator and your colleagues.

When the session has concluded…

■ Turn to the end of these materials. Complete the Participant Evaluation Form on page 61 and return it to your Site Coordinator.

■ Your feedback is integral to ensuring the integrity of this and future programs. We take pride in providing relevant, thought-provoking, and enlightening programs. But we rely on you to help us make it happen!

■ To further reinforce your understanding of today's content, as well as hone other aspects of your leadership skills, complete the suggested Post-presentation activities below.

Post presentation activities

■ Review the 2 Chapters of Phil's book that you read for pre-presentation activities.

■ Return to the terms you defined in the Pre-presentation materials, page 5 in your Participant Materials and change or add to the definitions your wrote.

■ Review your profile on the *Leadership Assessment Instrument™*. Complete your Development Plan with steps to engage in Powerful Conversations in your work as a leader.

■ Plan a conversation that uses the tools for Powerful Conversations.

■ Evaluate the results of your Powerful Conversation. Consider how you could improve your use of these tools.

■ Coach one of your managers to carryout Powerful Conversations. Teach him/her the concepts and follow-up on his/her use of the tools you taught.

Powerful Conversations

All leaders talk. It is the power of their talk that determines whether they win or lose.

Think about it: the leader's most fundamental and most important job is to be in touch with those around him or her. Whether it is in the hallways or on the phone, in the middle of the workday or after hours, while delivering a performance review to a key employee or a yearly address to thousands of employees, leaders are involved in a constant series of conversations.

Through these encounters, whether they are brief and spontaneous or scheduled and structured, leaders try to use their time with colleagues, employees, customers, and others to reach a variety of ends. Grabbing a moment, the leader takes the opportunity to influence and direct a member of the sales staff. A weekly meeting becomes a chance to coach a manager and gather information about the department's morale and its financial numbers. A quick e-mail checks on the progress of a research project and gives a boost of recognition and support to the team. During a strategy meeting, the leader negotiates next steps with division heads and outlines a coordinated approach. At a company awards ceremony, he or she tries to hammer home a message about values and goals. In short, the leader, through his or her conversations, aims to foster relationships, build support networks, and sharpen organizational focus.

Yet outcomes from conversations are too often unclear. Perceptions don't always match. Influences are frequently not as profound as one would hope. Communication is generally a struggle with mixed, uncertain, and unpredictable results. Too much conversation is ad hoc and hinges on moods, energy levels, relationships, and personalities. Sometimes a leader is right on point. Sometimes he or she clicks and forges a new connection. Other times, the leader misses the boat. Either way, he or she pushes on, lining up the next meeting, setting up the next goal, responding to the latest need for clarification.

It doesn't have to be that way. When I first started working in industry, I recognized that there was a relationship between conversations and success. I wanted to learn more. I looked for books, manuals, or anything that could accelerate my knowledge and development as a leader, but I was frustrated because I couldn't find anything specific.

Fortunately, my answer came at my first job. It was rich with a model of how to succeed through conversations work. Here I watched and observed what a High Impact Leader did and said through simple yet powerful communication. My boss, Jim Lewis loomed above the many other leaders at Raytheon. Everyone who worked for him believed in his vision because he spoke from the heart. He made everything crystal clear and followed up on every promise. I immediately trusted him and knew he cared not only about me, but all who worked for him. Everyone trusted Jim. This extended to customers, suppliers, and even competitors. He made every word impactful. It was everything that Jim said and how he said it that created his magic with people. Teams came together around Jim

to do whatever it took. The lesson that I quickly learned was that there was such power in the conversations of a High Impact Leader. I wanted to understand it so I could copy it and help others get there. I realized that if Jim's conversations could create this type of unstoppable momentum, then Powerful Conversations were much more than an art form -- they were a "must."

Why then is it such a burden for so many others? Is the ability to engage in Powerful Conversations a gift that Jim had, or was it a skill that he developed?

Powerful Conversations is about how great leaders—deliberately, economically, and with the utmost care—maximize their conversations to achieve clear leadership goals. In fact, when it comes to great leaders, strategic and intentful communication—more than being just an afterthought—is the very key to their leadership effectiveness. I call the people who are able to do this "High Impact Leaders" and I define their method of communication as "Powerful Conversations."

Some dismiss the "soft stuff" of communication because it seemingly does not relate directly to results. But that is just what Powerful Conversations do: they deliver results. The leaders that I know who use Powerful Conversations (whether they call them by that name or not) do so because that is the best, most reliable tool available for influencing others and gaining the buy-in and committed action needed to achieve real business objectives. Leaders such as Jeff Otten, president of Brigham & Women's Hospital, Mike Ruettgers, president of EMC Corporation, Steve Ozonian, president and CEO of Prudential Real Estate and Relocation Solutions, and Alene Korby, head of an operations group at Kraft Foods, would employ any tool that would help them to steer their organizations in a focused and driven way to maximize the bottom line and achieve their goals. Because Powerful Conversations deliver results, it has become one of their chosen tools.

I want to set the groundwork for several concepts that are important to my theme of Powerful Conversations -- and integral to an understanding of how leaders effectively drive organizational change. First, I want to describe Powerful Conversations clearly and succinctly before we move on to a more elaborate picture of their complexities. Then, I will define High Impact Leaders and describe who they are and what they do to make themselves so effective. Understanding the nature of this effectiveness requires that we also introduce the importance of trust -- the catalyst for turning conversations towards power.

The Importance of Quality Conversations

To recap, in basic definition, a Powerful Conversation is an interaction between two or more people that progresses from shared feelings, beliefs, and ideas to an exchange of wants and needs to clear action steps and mutual commitments. Specifically, a Powerful Conversation produces three outputs: an advanced agenda, shared learning, and a strengthened relationship.

How do Powerful Conversations differ from ordinary conversations? I think that

qualitative differences can be intuitively understood, but let me elaborate. Clear communication that moves towards results may seem easy but it is not. In fact, communication is rarely clear, consistent, and forward moving. Rather, it usually suffers the pitfalls of misunderstood fact and misinterpreted emotion. Furthermore, most communication around difficult issues is characterized by circuitous argument, uncertain outcomes, lack of clarity, conflict in personality, and misaligned goals.

When good things happen and desired results come about, it is often because the participants, in the urgency of the moment, persist beyond normal bounds to knock down the barriers holding them back from committed action. When two people truly connect this deeply, there is a release, remarkably clear understanding, and a connection that is sincere and meaningful. Both sides are clear about what needs to be done; both sides trust and understand each other that much more.

In most organizations, I have observed that this kind of conversation just doesn't happen. Wants and needs are rarely revealed, conversations skirt along at a surface level, and there is an evasion of real understanding which prevents clear, unambiguous commitments from being made. The evidence of this is that both sides at the end of a conversation frequently have vastly different understandings of what was said and what was felt -- and even what was committed to and what needs to be done next. This misunderstanding can be exacerbated when both men and women leaders are involved; there is, indeed, an entire body of recent research from Deborah Tannen and others concerning how gender may affect the way one receives a message. All leaders who strive to communicate more effectively need to understand and internalize how effective and impactful conversations are structured, how they are entered into and resolved, and what underlying factors foster (or prohibit) deep connection and real rapport.

While the study of conversations is not new, it has nevertheless failed to receive its proper treatment as a discipline. Consider, even in light of what you have read thus far, how important conversations are to the way we function in our daily work and personal lives. Conversations are the medium through which we build relationships, make connections, develop understanding, and work and live together. Yet as important as conversations are, it may nevertheless surprise you that we can analyze, measure, and practice them in a methodical manner. Certainly most of us never think to practice the way we interact with others. We should. Consider how much opportunity is lost because of subpar communication -- and how much impact can be gained through a more willful and disciplined approach.

Recently, conversations have finally begun to receive more attention for very practical reasons. Allen Webber, for example, in his seminal article in the *Harvard Business Review*, "What's So New About the New Economy," openly asserts that the most important work in the knowledge economy is conversation. Others are now recognizing that conversations are a principle driver in building that Holy Grail of our era, "the learning organization." Many researchers, including those at Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), have confirmed the necessity of the use of collaborative conversations in driving learning organizations. And conversations are finally being linked to the heart of an organization's workflow. As Juanita Brown and David Isaacs

observed in their article, "Conversations as a Core Business Process":

> Consider, for a moment, that the most widespread and pervasive learning in your organization may not be happening in training rooms, conference rooms, or boardrooms, but in the cafeteria, the hallways, and the cafe across the street. Imagine that through e-mail exchanges, phone visits, and bull sessions with colleagues, people at all levels of the organization are sharing critical business knowledge, exploring underlying assumptions, and creating innovative solutions to key business issues.

They then ask us to imagine that the "grapevine," which so many managers fear and discourage, is not a poisonous plant but a pathway to learning.

Brown and Isaacs go further in discussing the power of conversations. They claim that these types of "grapevine" conversations are qualitatively different from conversations normally associated with work or sanctioned by the organization. In their research, they uncovered nine factors that made these grapevine conversations more satisfying and powerful for the participants:

1. There was a sense of mutual respect between us.

2. We took the time to really talk together and reflect about what we each thought was important.

3. We listened to each other even when there were differences.

4. We were accepted and not judged by the others in the conversation.

5. Conversations helped strengthen our relationship.

6. We explored questions that mattered.

7. We developed shared meanings that weren't there when we began.

8. We learned something new or important.

9. It strengthened our mutual commitment.

In essence and effect, these casual, grapevine conversations establish levels of learning and trust between peers. In the same way, leaders, through the use of Powerful Conversations, are able to instill learning and trust with their colleagues and followers. It should be our objective to reach this level of connection in every important conversation we have.

Think back to a truly significant conversation you've recently had. Recall where it took place, what the circumstances were, how it started, and how it ended. Then try to answer the following questions: What was it that made that conversation important? Why does it stick in your mind with a lasting feeling and bear a weight of meaningfulness? What was said during it and what was meant? What resulted from the conversation?

I am certain that you will find that these three important ingredients were part of that experience:

1. All of those involved in the conversation shared important feelings, ideas, and beliefs and made it clear what those feelings/ideas/beliefs were to each other.

2. There were clear expressions of wants and needs that were completely accepted without judgment by all who heard them.

3. At the end of the conversation, there was real commitment that was explicitly stated and shared with all of those who were a part of that session.

These conditions may sound more familiar to you when you think of conversations that take place in intimate or family oriented situations. It is usually only in extremely comfortable circumstances that the barriers of fear and mistrust are low enough for the expression of true wants and needs -- the conditions necessary for openness, honesty, heightened awareness, and deepened connection. How many of us have remarked or felt that we have experienced real connection, growth, and a new level in a relationship through such a conversation?

What emerges through such connections is a deep empathy and understanding, a willingness to see other points of view, and a trustful rapport leading to clear commitment of effort and action. High Impact Leaders are able to do this through the technology of Powerful Conversations. In this way, they are able to move others to accomplish great things.

The High Impact Leader

I want to cement a basic understanding of what characterizes and defines a High Impact Leader.

You know them already. High Impact Leaders are the people who get results. They are the ones who make things happen. They are the leaders who are able to continually advance a clear agenda, get others to buy into it, and move an organization, a division, or a team forward. Being a High Impact Leader has nothing whatsoever to do with title or rank, because High Impact Leaders can be found up, down, and across any organization.

High Impact Leaders are the ones who cause no surprises. They are explicit, consistent, concise, and authentic. They sometimes have an abundance of charisma, but that is clearly not a pre-requisite. More to the point, High Impact Leaders are the ones who take charge wherever they are. They are the ones that others want to follow. They are also the leaders whose team others consistently want to join. When they move on to new roles or new territories, they do not travel alone. Others ask to go with them.

These conditions result because High Impact Leaders use the technology of Powerful Conversations and then match what they say with what they do. Through Powerful Conversations, they develop openness, honesty, and clarity in order to get others to believe and share in their goals, gain commitments, and foster trust. And they prove the worthiness of that trust by delivering on their own commitments and by making results happen.

The link between Powerful Conversations and High Impact Leaders lies in the relationship between what I refer to as "Say" and "Do." I have seen people skilled at the art of Powerful Conversations nevertheless fail as leaders because they fail to live up to their words. As a result, they never become High Impact Leaders. I have never known a High Impact Leader, however, who was not also a skillful Powerful Conversationalist, whether conscious of that designation or not. To be a High Impact Leader, you have to be able to conduct Powerful Conversations on a consistent basis and live up to the outcomes of those conversations. Why is this important? It has to do with trust -- without which conversations cannot progress towards the realization of commitments.

Let me elaborate on this point. It is only by following through on commitments and action steps that a High Impact Leader lives up to the openness and honesty unlocked by the technique of a Powerful Conversation. Consistently doing so builds trust in a leader and in his or her word. Failure to do so can be devastating. High Impact Leaders are vigilant about this. They actively track and follow through on commitments because they know that leaders are judged primarily on two things: what they say and what they do.

One of the most important functions of a Powerful Conversation is to create clarity, a critical success factor for building trust. I cannot tell you how frequently I have been involved in situations in which leaders, reflecting on problems that have arisen, say, "I can't believe they thought I meant that. I never had any intention to do that." And the followers say something like, "It's unbelievable. Our leader made a clear commitment to do this and now he denies that it was ever part of his agenda." Both sides shake their heads. Barriers go up. Trust is reduced or nonexistent.

True clarity implies that a leader says exactly what he or she means in such a way that his or her statements are received as intended. This requires openness, honesty, and an active and careful tracking of wants, needs, and commitments. It furthermore requires that those clear statements are lived up to with demonstrated actions.

My early family life gave me first-hand experience with the relationship between Say and Do. Clarity was not a prized value in my family, an Irish Catholic household in an immigrant neighborhood of Boston. In particular, the men in my family could not speak openly about their feelings. Leading with their vulnerabilities and clear expressing of wants and needs was completely out of the question. In this type of environment, when you don't openly say what you want and explain what you are going to do, then your partner in conversation is left with only one option: to guess at your intentions, feelings, and expectations. Such a disconnect between people causes damage beyond mere miscommunication. If you don't say very much about how you feel and what you need, those who are close to you eventually feel cheated, angry, and sometimes even hostile.

In business, the same principles apply. As a leader, do you want people to have to figure out how you feel or what you believe? Do you want your followers to have to interpret the things that you don't say? Do you want them to examine your actions when they are unexplained and force them to search for the reasons why you have done something? Worse still, do you want them to feel that there is no connection between what you say and what you do -- that your words, the very means by which you communicate and exert your influence and power as a leader, are meaningless? What I learned in a large family

environment is true to my thirty years of experience in business: such lack of clarity is dysfunctional. It creates tremendous ambiguity, which becomes the core reason why many things go wrong. Organizations in which Say/Do relationships are meaningless are like modern Towers of Babel: communication is impossible and work cannot get done.

This simple diagram on page 57, Tool #3, illustrates the connections and disconnections between Say/Do and how High Impact Leaders maximize these relationships.

Leaders are obviously judged on what they Say and Do. Less obviously, leaders are also judged by what they Don't Say and Don't Do. What is really interesting about the matrix (in Figure 1.1) is that it allows us to clearly see the importance of the diagonals, i.e., the relationships between Say and Don't Do, and Do and Don't Say. These are the areas where leaders get into trouble: when they don't do something they said they would, or when they don't say something about what they eventually do. Conversely, the best leaders do what they say, and refrain from doing what they haven't said. All of this may sound like a succession of tongue twisters. In fact, it represents the necessary bridge between having Powerful Conversations and becoming a High Impact Leader.

Trust

Gaining organizational trust has always been necessary but has never been more important. Within the last decade, leadership and organizational chains of command have changed drastically in our fluid knowledge economy. The old command and control rules no longer apply. Not so long ago, the authority and power of the head of an organization or a family was secure and unquestioned. At the most basic operating level, leader and follower were characterized by a command/perform model. The leader said "Jump!" and the follower asked, "How high?" Organizational hierarchies functioned the same way. Like seating order at the dinner table, flow charts clearly marked the path of decision making and command, and indicated who was to carry out directives. All in all, it was a rational means for dealing with a predictable world.

Today, though hierarchies still abound and chains of command still exist, the traditional methods for getting things done don't work quite as well as they used to. Flattened work groups, cross-functional project teams, and shifting roles have made work itself much more loosely defined and difficult to manage and organize. For the leader confronted with such conditions, the speed at which working relationships shift make the traditional ways in which trust and understanding have been fostered -- extensive face to face contact, a slow process of getting to know the other person -- a thing of the past.

High Impact Leaders today lead in a better way because they recognize that the shortest path to achieving objectives is to build trust and gain clear commitments from others. Specifically, they engage in Powerful Conversations to uncover the wants and needs of others in order to understand what will motivate those people to join forces with the leader and to live up to the commitments of a conversation.

On a larger scale, trust is also the operating principle through which organizations foster openness and information sharing in order to make the most expeditious decisions, uncover problems, and convert ideas into action. High Impact Leaders value trust as an asset with unlimited return. They develop the solid foundation of trust through the three outputs of a Powerful Conversation: an advanced agenda, a deepened relationship, and shared learning. Then they build upon that foundation by living up to the commitments that are the deliverables of the Powerful Conversation.

Think of trust as a bank account. Every time a leader is clear in a conversation and fulfills a commitment (i.e. makes the connection between Say and Do), he or she adds money to the account. Every time the leader fails to live up to a commitment, follow through on a conversation, or make clear the relation between his or her actions and words, the account is depleted. Too many withdrawals will result in a complete lack of trust -- a condition in which no leader, however charismatic, can succeed.

So, if I make a commitment to do something in a conversation and I fail to follow through once, I may be charged only a small debit on my account. That person might say, "Well, Phil forgot. I'm disappointed, but he's busy and has many other things to think about." If I make another commitment to that person and I don't follow through again, however, he or she will begin to suspect that my forgetfulness was willful and deliberate. He or she might think that I am ambiguous about my commitments or that what I say in a conversation is not connected with what I will do in my actions. If the pattern continues, that person will no longer trust me.

In the course of multiple interactions throughout a day, it may seem difficult or impossible for a busy leader weighed with responsibilities to be scrupulously attentive to living up to all commitments. It is tempting for many of us to think of commitments as a nicety or a means of placating people with short-term satisfaction in the interests of fostering pleasant interactions. Such a cavalier approach comes at the expense of long-term trust.

High Impact Leaders do not make blind requests or promises that they cannot fulfill. Instead, they skillfully orchestrate the Powerful Conversations in which they engage to make clear that all parties understand the exact commitments that have been made. Then they check into those commitments and make sure they are actionable through follow-up conversations. They track the wants and needs of others and find ways to reinforce their desire to understand the wants and needs of others, often through continued follow-up conversations.

They do so because they know that trust must exist if the High Impact Leader is to achieve his or her agenda through Powerful Conversations.

The Structure & Impact of Powerful Conversations

When most of us communicate, goals and desired outcomes are hit or miss. We might get lucky in advancing our agendas; we infrequently consider learning as a critical outcome; and we hope not to damage the relationship too badly along the way. So talking with another person in the course of a busy day, we dust off the relationship, share a laugh or a complaint, and, for the most part, only incrementally improve our ability to connect. More likely than not, we simply maintain the status quo, put a few patches on the leaks in our information, and move on.

With High Impact Leaders, it's different. They see their conversations not as a challenge or survival, but as an opportunity. Specifically, they achieve their goals by clarifying commitments and creating next steps -- and they do so in ways that promote learning and measurably improve relationships. In this chapter, I want to focus on how High Impact Leaders accomplish all of this by consciously paying heed to the building blocks of Powerful Conversations.

In case any doubt remains, please allow me to dispel it now: this book is not about the "soft stuff." Powerful Conversations is a concrete tool used by hard-hitting leaders at organizations such as Kraft Foods, Baystate Health System, Xerox, Prudential Real Estate and Relocation Solutions, and Ralston Purina, to name just a few. High Impact Leaders in these companies engage in Powerful Conversations consistently, deliberately, and systematically. High Impact Leaders in numerous other organizations that I have observed use Powerful Conversations in an implicit fashion: they may not refer to "Powerful Conversations," but they practice the discipline and adhere to its principles nonetheless. They, too, intrinsically know that communication is actually the hard stuff -- and the stuff that delivers results.

The Costs of Status Quo Communication

In most organizations today, too much time and energy are wasted on communication. The waste lies not in the effort but the effectiveness. Leaders in these companies try to communicate effectively, but they largely don't succeed. The net result: less efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity, and more missed opportunities that would have been capitalized upon if people were communicating powerfully. I would take this a step further: I believe that organizations rise or fall based on the power of the conversations taking place within them.

Powerful Conversations are, among other things, a way to drive out the dysfunctionalities within your organization. They are also the key to unleashing the real power inside individuals within your organization. Powerful Conversations breed a powerful organization. Ineffective communication, on the other hand, results in a trail of lost opportunity.

Consider, as an example, the high tech wars of the 1980s. As a vice president at Keane, Inc. -- then a blossoming start-up, now a billion dollar company -- I was a

witness to (and sometimes participant in) these wars. Time and again, I saw companies underperform when their leaders were not listening and talking effectively. This reinforced for me how collaborative communication, openness, and trust fundamentally improve an organization's ability to compete, grow, and respond to rapid change.

Twenty years ago, Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) led the way with small and mid-range computers. (Microsoft and the other industry titans today were not even on the radar screen). The company stands out not only because of its early success, but because of its dramatic fall. When new markets emerged in personal computers, software, and systems integration, DEC stuck to its traditional business despite the warnings of its smartest people and its best customers. DEC's leaders (Ken Olsen and his top lieutenants) were so grateful to the technology that had gotten DEC so far so fast that they didn't want to hear what others were saying, both within and outside the organization, about the imminent obsolesce of that technology. People told DEC's leadership that the company had to switch gears, but they soon realized that their warnings were falling on deaf ears. Eventually, they stopped telling.

Many of DEC's best people left in frustration. Some of these people ended up leading the organizations that would eventually overwhelm DEC when the industry indeed turned. DEC's failure to keep pace wasn't due to the fact that it lacked the resources to compete in these new markets, for DEC had capital like no other company in the industry. The problem was all about communication -- the good ideas simply weren't getting out into the open and weren't being heard. By 1998, DEC's fall was complete: it had lost so much market share that Compaq was able to snatch it up.

Even at Keane, a great success by any standards, I look back and know it could have done even better in creating a forum for new thinking and ideas. For example, I remember talking to a young man who worked for me named Eric Bedell. He was passionately excited about a dramatic new idea he'd heard the night before at a Boston Computing Society meeting. A fellow named Mitch Kapor had spoken to them about his vision of applying PC technology to spreadsheets. It may sound like common sense today, but it was a radical idea for the time. That night, Kapor also made what amounted to an open plea for help in building his new company. Eric was interested in the idea -- for Keane. We had an open culture, but not one that would seriously entertain such a "radical" idea. I tried in vain to dissuade Eric with strong warnings about the weaknesses of this new "small market computing," but he felt strongly about the market's potential. So he left Keane and went to work for this start-up, a company called Lotus Development Corporation. The next time I saw Eric, he was in a limo at Kennedy Airport and I was waiting for a taxi in the rain.

All organizations make mistakes. The best organizations constantly work to identify and rectify the communication failures and gaps that underlie those mistakes so that they won't happen again. Hewlett-Packard, the only hardware manufacturer of any size and scope that has stayed near the top as the DECs of the world fell, leads by a principle of collaborative interaction. The leaders there encourage people to dig down into what they are really thinking to unearth the best ideas and discover the

real opportunities. This is the same principle behind Microsoft's famous "e-mails to and from Bill." It's also how Cisco Systems operates, motivating people in the organization to speak up and express what's really going on. High Impact Leaders use the most effective ways available to communicate with people because they know that they cannot possibly see what is around the next corner. And you can never predict who within your organization will stumble onto the next big idea. That is why every conversation is critical.

That is also why High Impact Leaders prepare for their conversations -- so that they can make the most of them. Mike Ruettgers, president of EMC Corporation, carries a notebook with him wherever he goes. In that notebook, he painstakingly records what people tell him and what he tells people. He doesn't want to lose track of an idea. Nor does he want to break a commitment that he makes. Mike Ruettgers did not start off being a naturally gifted communicator, but he worked at it. He did this through deliberate and structured usage of Powerful Conversation technology. Today, it is one of the most effective tools he has in his leadership arsenal for driving conversations towards results. If Powerful Conversations weren't about results, then Mike Ruettgers wouldn't bother. But they do lead to results. So Mike Ruettgers uses them.

The ability to generate and manage quality conversations distinguishes effective leaders. It is the way they share critical business knowledge, ask tough questions, test assumptions, and catalyze action. It is the means through which they initiate requests and obtain commitments. It is how they get results. And natural born communication skills have nothing to do with it.

The Stages of a Powerful Conversation

All leaders who strive to communicate in more effective ways need a clear understanding of how Powerful Conversations are structured and how they forge a deep connection between participants. To that end, let's examine the progression of a Powerful Conversation.

A Powerful Conversation typically proceeds in three stages.

■ Stage One. In the beginning of a Powerful Conversation, the initiator of the conversation sets up his or her agenda with an honest feeling or a sincere expression of need. For our purposes, I use the term "agenda" to describe a desired outcome – that is, a goal that requires the cooperation, support, and commitment of one or more persons. The statement of an honest feeling or a sincere need signals to the other participant(s) in the conversation the importance of the agenda. It also constitutes a request for help and contribution.

■ Stage Two. In the middle of a Powerful Conversation, there is a discussion of the issues enmeshed in the agenda. A High Impact Leader skillfully probes for the wants and needs of the other participant. In this way, he or she uncovers the goals that the other person(s) has which must be met in the process of achieving the leader's own agenda. This is the stage where the High Impact Leader

surfaces any hidden agendas and connects facts with underlying assumptions in order to advance his or her agenda.

■ Stage Three. In the closing stage of a Powerful Conversation, the High Impact Leader makes sure that the participants have nailed down the next steps and are open about what they will do to make those commitments come to life. The closing of a Powerful Conversation is also the time where a High Impact Leader asks openly whether the other person really got what he or she wanted in that conversation. This is a good way to ensure that a Powerful Conversation will lead to results.

Stages aside, you can always tell if you have had a Powerful Conversation by examining the conversation for three outcomes:

1. Advancement of an agenda;

2. Shared learning; and

3. A stronger relationship

I call these the three measurements of a Powerful Conversation. They are the telltale signs that reveal whether a Powerful Conversation has taken place. When it indeed has, there is a furthering of trust -- and a feeling that next time, the parties will get to agreement and advancement of mutual agendas that much faster.

The Barriers To Real Connection

It is essential not to skip a stage when progressing through a Powerful Conversation. Otherwise, you can fall into the trap of leaping forward in an undisciplined way. The commitments that result from such a conversation are frequently shaky.

It is the initial stage of the Powerful Conversation -- the honest feeling, the sincere expression of need -- that presents the most challenges for a High Impact Leader. This isn't because High Impact Leaders are less humane or emotionally attuned than others. Rather, the difficulty lies in the fact that High Impact Leaders are typically driven, focused, and optimistic of outcome. They therefore find it hard to take the time to make a real connection and express any fear, worry, or need.

A leader, by most accepted understandings, has a healthy ego, is a model of confidence, and stands as a paragon of strength. Showing weakness or emotion is considered a mistake. In fact, exhibiting honest vulnerability is the key to making connections with other people -- the initial opening that allows a Powerful Conversation to take place and gives the leader the license to lead.

As Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, said in an interview with Linkage's Global Institute For Leadership Development in 1997:

I think every leader has to be honest. I did an interview at NPR last week and the person asked me, 'What's the most important quality today for leadership?' I said to him, 'I'm going to give you a surprising word and you're going to be taken back by

it.' It wasn't something I thought about, just something that came to me, and that is to display vulnerability.

The use of Powerful Conversations technology requires us to be open and honest about our feelings, including our needs and weaknesses -- or as Schultz says, our vulnerabilities. For many leaders, relentlessly driven, focused on their own agendas, obsessed with bottom line results, this is the reason why Powerful Conversations are so difficult to practice in the first instance.

What Howard Schultz says about vulnerability is true. Vulnerability allows us to open up the wants and needs of others. As Schultz went on to express in the same interview:

Sometimes we don't have all the answers, sometimes we make mistakes... It's really a question of being honest and open, sharing the vulnerabilities and sometimes the insecurities. And I think people today want their leaders to display the balance of the human condition. I also think these are gradual steps that people are going to need to take. People are going to need to build bridges and look for small victories. But the people that I'm around -- and it's really my peer group which is young or relatively younger CEOs -- represent a different kind of leader and a different kind of manager today.

When it comes to emotion, however, too many leaders are risk averse. There is nothing more difficult to acknowledge than embarrassment, emotion, weakness, and anxiety -- not to mention simple wants and needs. It is only through honesty about our emotions and needs that we are able to really connect. It was five years ago, on a very sad day, that I first truly learned this lesson. I was taught by a person who practiced Powerful Conversations every day of her life that I knew her.

I include this story in all humility as an ode to someone whose wisdom about communication goes far beyond where I have gotten, despite my best efforts. It is a story that is not intended to make you feel melancholy about another person's sadness and I do not include it in a business book lightly. It is a story that vividly illustrates the way fear of emotion serves as a barrier to connection, and I have included it only for that purpose.

The horrible news arrived on the first day of Lent, on an otherwise bright spring-like day in Boston. The diagnosis was conclusive. Annette, my wife, had a severe type of leukemia. They called it Acute Miloblastic, which simply meant that the leukemia was fast moving and spreading like crazy among the trillions of cells in her body. There was a slim hope: 20% of cases in recent years had been treated to the point where they were under control and in remission. But we faced an imminent and profound change that neither of us had ever really expected. The treatment plan was to be excruciating, with no great promise of recovery. It was to begin immediately -- the next morning in fact -- canceling our first vacation together in five years.

Inside, my emotions were overwhelming. I was apprehensive, gloomy, dismal, and devastated. If I had to define only one feeling, I can do no better than to recall a deep

and frantic worry about everything. Not wanting to address fear or acknowledge my worry, I gave my best, most optimistic pitch in the car on the way home. My talk continued as we pulled into the driveway and even as we settled into our living room. I told her how we were going to beat the odds. In fact, I insisted that the odds were in our favor, given Annette's strength and her other special qualities.

It seemed the right thing to do. Rather than deal with the worry and the fear… or the things that I needed… or more importantly the things that Annette needed… or the commitments we would need to make to go through this together, I continued to spew positive messages to a woman who listened patiently until I finished.

When I sat down next to her, she grabbed my hand and said words that I will never forget. She said, "I really need to talk with you about how I feel and I need to know more about how you feel because I know you are worried. I need to talk with you about what I want and what I need. Because there is so much to say and so little time now to talk about this. Would you make a commitment to put away your optimism for a moment and tell me what is going on with you?"

As she held my hand and looked in my eyes, I knew that all my "powerful" words of optimism were not powerful at all. They didn't disguise anything about my feelings. They didn't diminish the worry. They didn't change reality. With her words, I fell apart. But we were then able to have a Powerful Conversation, the most powerful of our lives together. I listened to her explain her feelings. She told me of her fear and worry. It was not about dying or the pain, but about knowing that everyone else would be okay.

We faced up to the real wants and needs around the treatment plan. We made commitments that we both lived by throughout the most awful period of physical pain one could imagine. During that very long year of illness, we had other Powerful Conversations (although we didn't refer to them as such). I felt and understood that the conversations were powerful because we continued to communicate our needs and meet our goals together. We both grew enormously in spiritual ways, as well as through a deeper learning about each other and about life. Day by day, our relationship became even stronger.

The lessons I have learned in business pale to what I learned through that journey. But it was clear to me later how universal the issues of communication are -- indeed, that a conversation which advances trust in a business relationship is only removed from such deeply personal connections by a matter of degree rather than of kind. I also learned that one can face the most important things in life this way. I remind myself of that when I face difficulties related to business or other aspects of my personal life.

I can see parallels in my career with how I acted in first talking with Annette. Rather than deal directly with difficult emotions and uncertain situations, I typically prefer to avoid them. My first and strongest instinct is to use optimism to skirt around fears or concerns. I know now that I should be clearly expressing my worries and confronting what is actually going on in order to find real solutions, yet I still often

stumble on exactly the same hurdle. You would think that I had learned a lesson overwhelming enough to not have such difficulties repeat themselves, but I continue to need to relearn. I find, as well, that this is the hardest part in training other leaders around the practice of Powerful Conversations. I comfort myself with the observation that others so frequently exhibit this same tendency. It must be something basic to being human.

Organizational Defenses and Undiscussables

Most of us in the workforce find little reason to open up. Guardedness, half-truths, hidden dialogue, and other "organizational defensive routines," as Chris Argyris calls them, are the normal way of doing business. Opening up obviously does not always mean expressions of strong feelings and caring such as in the story I just relayed, but it is critical nonetheless. In business and in life, the difficulty of being open can (and probably more frequently does) refer to the emotional content around facts and hard truths.

There is nothing harder than honesty about real work and organizational issues. Sitting down with the CFO if you are a project head, or standing before the global sales force if you are a CEO, will bring out a range of conflicting impulses. Many of us readily, naturally, and willingly mix truth with half-truth, optimistic visions with achievable realities.

Chris Argyris, my former professor at Harvard, described this phenomenon so well in 1990 in his book, Overcoming Organizational Defenses:

Whenever human beings are faced with any issues that contain a significant embarrassment or threat, they act in ways that bypass, as best as they can, the embarrassment or threat. In order for the bypass to work, it must be covered up. The basic strategy involves bypass and cover up.

Because most individuals use these actions, the actions become part of the fabric of every day life. And because so many individuals use these actions frequently, the actions become organizational norms. The actions come to be viewed as rational, sensible and realistic.

It happens between individuals and it happens organization-wide. Argyris, crediting author Peter Block for pushing forward our understanding on this issue, goes on to say:

This logic [of organizational defensive routines] is based on four premises: (1) craft messages that contain inconsistencies, (2) act as if the messages are not inconsistent, (3) make the ambiguity and inconsistency in the message undiscussable, and (4) make the undiscussability of the undiscussable also undiscussable.

All of this happens between individuals and on a more organization-wide basis. It happens in big situations and in small. Organizational defensive routines are why

the Challenger disaster occurred and how Ken Olsen & Co. lost the rudder at DEC. It's the dance a parent and child go through discussing homework and grades. It's what takes place under the surface in the performance review meeting that doesn't get at the painful truths necessary for both parties to push forward and grow.

When I think of the "undiscussable," I think of the behavior I observed at a meeting of the senior leadership group of a large, professional services company with 80 offices worldwide.

Prior to the meeting, I had discussions with two of the seven members of the group. Both told me that they believed that the sales compensation system was negatively impacting sales and had to be changed. They spoke openly about how the organization was moving in the wrong direction as a result of the incentives used with the sales force. They expressed these feelings clearly -- passionate in their belief that this had to be changed for the organization to reach its agreed to growth objectives.

The president of the organization was known to have different feelings about the current incentive program. As the original architect of the plan, he had championed the framework and held onto it throughout the years.

The meeting was specifically set up to look at the possibilities of correcting the sales efforts, which had begun falling short as of late. A number of ideas came up at the meeting on how to increase the number of targeted accounts and the penetration of accounts. The team also discussed realigning sales territories, hiring more sales associates, leveraging the senior leadership on sales calls, and conducting marketing and direct mail campaigns. But no one brought up the sales incentive program that the two senior leaders had complained about to me prior to the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, all of the senior leaders rank-ordered the list of tactics and did normative group voting to define three modes of attack. As the meeting ended, they laughed and encouraged each other, spent a few minutes socializing, hands in pockets and relaxed, and casually mentioned other concerns and upcoming plans. I could not help but wonder what they really felt they had accomplished, and whether they really believed that this meeting had been effective or powerful. Indeed, would the commitments made inside of the meeting really result in the bottom line improvements they were looking for?

I later called both leaders who had mentioned to me their private concerns about the sales incentive program and asked them how they felt the meeting had gone. Their attitudes were similarly positive. I referenced their earlier comments. Neither seemed upset that the program had gone undiscussed. One of them said, "I decided not to go there. I've been there before and it just wasn't the right time to discuss it."

I pressed him. I wanted to determine how he had really perceived the meeting's results. "Didn't you tell me that it was the only way to get the numbers? You kept talking about the need for major surgery.""He made his case for the quality of the meeting. "Yes," he said, "you're right. But maybe we can do enough to get close by taking on the approaches that came up in the meeting."

I was amazed at the gap between his old convictions and his new attitude, so I continued to dig. We backed up and talked about his feelings about day-to-day operations and eventually the topic of the meeting came up again. This time, he was more honest. He told me that he didn't feel that they had advanced towards any kind of important goal. There hadn't been any mutual learning. It was a meeting like any other meeting, ending in a list and a good feeling. There was an unspoken sense that any real work would take place later, in the trenches -- if at all.

The meeting had maintained relationships and placated the president. But it didn't examine anything hard. Nothing powerful emerged, not even in the maintaining of those relationships. No one felt that they had uncovered something important or learned something new. No one believed they were actually going to accomplish something significant. In a sense, the meeting was a social ritual that had little to do with its stated goals.

This gap between reality and perception is at the root of what organizational psychologists are examining when they refer to "Mental Models." Mental Models are interrelated sets of ideas, beliefs, values and assumptions about how the world works (and should work). They are important to understand because they underlie our commitments, focus our emotional energy, and influence our ability to deliver on what we vocalize.

The senior leader's perceptions of the quality of the meeting indicated a misalignment between his Mental Model and what had actually happened: he truly believed that the group needed to address the sales incentive program (his Mental Model), but the group addressed other side issues instead. Powerful Conversations, through their rigor and structure, demand that we get to the inner sanctums of the hidden dialogue between people. They unearth the "undiscussables" that people, in fact, want to discuss. Power is unleashed when people are able to talk about their real thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and needs in a focused and results-oriented way.

Closing the Door to Open Up

What happens when the undiscussables never get discussed? Consider the following story. Two years ago, I was in discussions with a Wall Street equity analyst about his firm's recent turnover problems. The firm had just lost three of its top analysts to a rival investment bank. I had been asked to talk with this analyst in order to understand what had happened. Getting to the real facts behind the situation proved, not surprisingly, to be a challenge.

This senior analyst was a great success on Wall Street, just as he had been in a prior career with a major industrial giant. Our conversation, however, began in a relatively bland fashion. I asked what he thought was happening that would have led to the departures of key staff and I listened politely and quietly to his answers. He cited the usual litany of problems with the firm, deficiencies in the senior leadership, and so on.

When he took a breath between sentences, I began to probe deeper. I asked him how he felt about what had happened -- how it impacted him and what he needed and wanted. I asked him what he required from the organization in the way of help. I inquired about the kinds of commitments he would need theoretically to be kept inside of the organization.

He interrupted with a strong look. Instead of beginning to speak he stood up, walked over to the door, and closed it. Then he returned and sat down.

"Do you want to know how I really feel?" he asked. Knowing he did not require an answer, I only nodded. It was from this point that we really connected. He told me what he really felt and what he believed the organization needed. In other words, he discussed the undiscussables.

It was the act of closing the door that I found myself thinking about later. It was as if he could only open himself up by closing access to himself in other ways. What was it that released the analyst from his guardedness? By merely closing the door and shutting off the organization at large, he became more open. It was a fascinating gesture, one that you may also have observed in organizations as a necessary condition (and symbolic kickoff) for an honest conversation.

What prompted the analyst to get up and close the door was the nature of my questions. I demonstrated sincerely that I wanted to know what was going on from his perspective. Recognizing the honesty of my inquiry, he was moved to reveal his own hidden dialogue. And hidden dialogue can only be revealed in hidden places. How much better would that firm have been if openness prevailed -- if people felt free to reveal their true wants and needs without having to close their doors? If such an atmosphere had been present, I assure you that I wouldn't have been privy to it: the three top analysts wouldn't have left and I wouldn't have been called in to help deal with the situation after the damage had already occurred.

Listening

It is by demonstrating sincere interest in another person's real thoughts and feelings that a leader is able to tap into hidden dialogue, surface the undiscussables, and uncover wants and needs. By being a skilled listener, a High Impact Leader can sort out the content of this hidden dialogue into important facts and assumptions.

There are four important principles involved with becoming a great listener:

1. Focusing in a visible way
2. Sorting and compartmentalizing needs and wants
3. Recognizing the feeling as well as the content
4. Balancing inquiry, advocacy, and judgment

Being able to listen intently to another person is a great gift. It is critical that you visibly focus without distraction, on both the words that another person is speaking

along with the feelings that he or she is relaying. There are two components here: you must actually be listening, and you must visibly be showing that you are doing so. Only then will the speaker feel compelled to speak in total candor. Active listening, then, helps lower the barriers blocking a Powerful Conversation.

Many political leaders have mastered this art. They exude a sense of intimacy that creates a feeling, in return, that the person listening is worth following. John F. Kennedy was one such politician. In a recent interview with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Isaiah Berlin explained why Kennedy was such a great listener:

> He listened with extreme intentness. This was one of the things which struck me most forcibly. I've never known a man who listened to every single word that one uttered more attentively. His eyes protruded slightly, he leant forward toward one, and one was made to feel nervous and responsible by the fact that obviously every word registered. And he replied always very relevantly. He didn't obviously have ideas in his own mind which he wanted to expound, or for which he simply used one's own talk as an occasion, as a sort of launching pad. He really listened to what one said and answered that.

Great listeners also demonstrate the ability to sort out what is really being said in a conversation. Through close listening, they can separate what a person wants (a nice-to-have) from what a person needs (a have-to-have). Then, too, most communication is filled with non-direct expressions, as well as non-verbal language. Body language usually comprises a big part of the message. The average person focuses intently on the content of the message and totally misses the feeling behind the content. High Impact Leaders recognize such feelings and make it a point to let the other person know that they have grasped the feeling in addition to the words.

The other principle skill of great listeners is that they are able to balance inquiry, advocacy, and judgment. They inquire, in a non-judgmental way, so that they can understand the facts behind the facts. At the same time, they project that they are on your side, and will advocate on your behalf. And, at the end of the day, they possess the judgment necessary for proper interpretation. Again, John Kennedy serves as an example. In the words of Isaiah Berlin:

> The point about him was that he gave one the air of luminous intelligence and extreme rationality, and cutting through a lot of dead wood. He didn't accept loose or vague statements, or the kind of general statements which people make who haven't very much to say but feel they ought to make some contribution to the conversation, simply as a form of registering the fact that they are present and have views.

Whenever that kind of statement was made by any of us, he stopped us short and asked us exactly what these words meant, and brought it all down to extremely clear and shining brass tacks.

Kennedy's inquiry, along with his advocacy and judgment, go a long way in explaining why Kennedy was such an effective and impactful leader. He didn't listen

simply to show that he cared, or because he was interested in scoring points with the other person. He listened, like all great listeners, because he was intently interested in the information. He knew that the best way to uncover facts was to connect in a deep and intimate way.

The Tower of Power

Most of us are not John Kennedy. For those leaders who lack the innate ability to make deep connections, listen intently, uncover hidden dialogue, and progress towards mutual commitments and action steps, the Tower of Power is a tool well worth understanding and using.

The Tower of Power is a four step plan that allows a conversation to move through the three stages of a Powerful Conversation that we discussed earlier, from an expression of honest feelings (Stage One) to an examination of mutual wants and needs incorporated in an agenda (Stage Two) to, finally, an establishment and confirmation of clear commitments that will lead to action (Stage Three). It is also a tool for ensuring Powerful Conversations. If you conduct your conversation by faithfully and successfully working your way up the Tower, you will have had a Powerful Conversation. It is, in fact, impossible to have a Tower of Power conversation that does not result in advanced agendas, shared learning, and strengthened relationships -- the very measurements of a Powerful Conversation.

Many High Impact Leaders internalize the steps of the Tower in order to prod and guide the conversation towards desired results. Alternatively, others openly use the Tower as a framework with their conversation partners so that they can proceed together toward a Powerful Conversation. In the operations group at Kraft Foods, for example, diagrams of the Tower of Power are on the walls of meeting rooms and offices. They are there to remind people how conversations should progress in the name of effective and impactful communication. As Kraft has proven, you can bring the Tower out in the open. It is not a tool that a leader needs to hide, like a magic card. See page 55, Tool #2.

Here are the four steps involved in using the Tower of Power to structure your Powerful Conversations.

■   Step One: What's Up?

In this initial step, High Impact Leaders strive to make emotional connections with the other person so that he or she, in turn, will open up, share hidden dialogue, and reveal undiscussables. The High Impact Leader is trying simultaneously to express his/her own agenda, wants, and needs, and to uncover the agenda, wants, and needs of the other person. High Impact Leaders know that in order to advance their own agendas, they must also advance the agendas of the other party. They know that in order to fulfill their own wants and needs, they must likewise fulfill the wants and needs of the other person.

This knowledge is based upon the difference between pushing and pulling in a conversation. People who have studied the power of language are aware of the connection between uncovering strong feelings and expressing undiscussables. Researchers such as Fernando Flores advocate speaking with intention because actions result from words. A January 1999 Fast Company article describes a workout session between Flores and a team of senior leaders needing a transformed language for effective communication. In the article, Flores states that trust and openness require truth. But he seeks truth through abrupt, almost abusive confrontations in which honesty is purposely hostile. For example, he instructs partners in conversations to state negative opinions first. Under his methodology, Flores heaps scorn on executives until their anger and frustration boil over, eventually creating a new, relaxed, and open mood. While the technique may work in the short term and under lab-like conditions of a closed session, such a "pushing" approach does not yield long-term connection, genuine honesty, and real trust.

More effective and lasting connection comes through pulling, not pushing. It is why leading with vulnerability is so necessary. It draws others in, rather than forcing them to comply. It is why a High Impact Leader will open a conversation with a statement like, "I need to talk about this situation because I am concerned about us reaching our goals," rather than an admonition like, "We have to talk about your poor performance in order to rectify what you are doing wrong."

■   Step Two: What's So?

In this step, the focus is on determining the hidden factors underlying the issue or problem.

Typically in conversations, people are used to moving rapidly from facts to inferences and assertions. Building on Chris Argyris's work, Peter Senge describes this kind of learning and discovery as "adaptive," because it involves doing the same thing in patterned ways, over and over again, with minor adaptations. Leaders need to do more. They need to probe and question in order to establish fact and the soundness of the reasoning that lies behind assertions. Rigorous thinking is required. If emotional connection is soundly established in the "What's Up?" step, both parties can join with equal enthusiasm and effort (and with little fear and defensiveness) in uncovering the real assumptions and facts underlying an issue. Senge calls this kind of learning "generative" because it takes understanding to the next level, resulting in new designs and new ways of looking at things. There is no way to get to generative learning unless undiscussables are discussed.

Think back to the example cited earlier of the seven leaders gathered to discuss how to increase sales and hit growth objectives. Suppose the atmosphere in that room was devoid of organizational defensive routines. The president might then have been able to say:

> I feel that we have to look again at the fundamental systemic issues that are adversely impacting our ability to be able to sell and reach our growth objectives. I want to be sure that we examine all of our assumptions governing our thinking and ask each other hard questions, openly, and honestly. I would like you to know that I will put away all of my prior assumptions and listen closely. This is my commitment in starting this meeting because I need and want us to get where we have to be. It is my fear that some of our prior discussion on this has choked off thinking and may have led us to error.

The results of such a meeting would have been drastically different from what actually happened, both in feeling and outcome.

■   Step Three: What's Possible?

This is the step of the Tower of Power that is too frequently skipped. Once participants have uncovered the assumptions and facts during the "What's So?" phase, they are eager to jump directly into an action plan. It is important, however, to take extra time to imagine alternatives and forge creative solutions that might result in smarter business decisions beyond the obvious. To reiterate: don't omit the "What's Possible?" step.

A High Impact Leader challenges the people on the other side of the conversation to stretch their thinking and go beyond the boundaries of what they believe to be possible and most appropriate. In the best conversations, the "leader" and "follower" build off one another's ideas to create new insights and possibilities. This is where great partnerships or great teams work so well. Enjoying the interplay and synergy of each other's logic and unique perspective, remarkable in their rapport, they leap towards possibilities with shared intuition. Those who have experienced this in its highest form are aware of its rare and significant value.

■   Step Four: Let's Go!

The final step of the Tower of Power involves the "Let's Go!" step. Successful conversations end with a confirmed and mutually understood commitment to action. It is critical that such action steps be clear and explicit. Too often, because of a newfound shared enthusiasm, participants leap into commitments and action steps without taking extra care to confirm them during this final stage. Even though we think we have an understanding, we do not. Later, we are surprised by how a person fails to carry out what we had agreed to. The confusion is a result of unclear commitments made during the "Let's Go!" step.

High Impact Leaders make clear requests around actions with the conditions of satisfaction explicitly stated. Such clarity is crucial because it provides each party to the conversation with an added sense of ownership concerning the commitments involved.

It is important not to force an upward progression along the Tower of Power without building up a solid foundation below. As noted before, you should never skip a step (going from "What's So?" to "Let's Go!", for instance). Nor should you begin the conversation with a step ("What's Possible?", for instance), having neglected early necessary steps ("What's Up?" and "What's So?", for instance). Skilled users of the Tower, however, often shift back down to a previous step, depending on the circumstances and quality of the conversation. For example, we might discover at the "What's Possible?" step additional key facts requiring us to move back temporarily to the "What's So?" step. We may feel with "Let's Go!" that the other person's heart and enthusiasm are completely detached from the action steps. This usually indicates that an agenda, want, or need not yet unearthed and revealed remains below the surface blocking commitment. We would then need to go back and dwell more deliberately on "What's So?" or even "What's Up?" This type of movement is never a waste of time.

People walk away from a Powerful Conversation feeling energized and positive. That, in itself, is a measurement useful for analyzing its impact. It is not surprising that good feelings emerge when progress has been made in a conversation. Both parties feel that way because they have acknowledged wants and needs and shared ideas. Ultimately, participants in a conversation feel good when agendas have been advanced. High Impact Leaders certainly feel good when they are able to move forward in ways that positively affect their ability to deliver on results.

The contrast of this is equally revealing. When a conversation has not been genuine and honest, there is nothing positive about the resulting feelings. Energy levels also are reversed. Participants feel tired and drained. Organizations in which Powerful Conversations are not taking place are characterized by low morale and a lack of focus. No one takes charge of an issue. Old patterns stay fixed.

For now, keep in mind the positive impact of a Powerful Conversation. Shared learning, building of trust, sincere connection -- all of these factors add up to an improved relationship. They also foster environments in which organizations are able to get beyond their defensive routines so that they can really innovate and create value. There is nothing more liberating, satisfying, or motivating than when individuals in an organization are able to collaborate successfully in realizing vision and strategy.

At the end of a Powerful Conversation, memories of frustrations and tiredness are gone. Only the energy remains. And that is the energy that fuels great achievements.

Tool # 1:

Planning, Conducting, and Measuring Powerful Conversations

In Chapter 2, we detailed the structure and impact of Powerful Conversations. The guidelines contained in the following tool will further help you plan, conduct, and measure your own Powerful Conversations (as well as observe those of others).

I.   PLANNING POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

   Step #1: Organize the conversation around your own agenda -- and anticipate theirs

   Step #2: Define your desired outcome -- and anticipate theirs

   Step #3: Identify natural points of intersection between your agenda/desired outcome and their agenda/desired outcome

   Step #4: Think of any other factors or issues that might potentially get you off track -- and decide how you might defuse them

   Step #5: Pay attention to timing -- make sure that you don't try to have the Powerful Conversation at "the wrong time," which will ruin your best-laid plans

II. CONDUCTING POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

   Stage #1: Introduction

   • Set up your own agenda with an honest feeling, belief, or idea

   • Hint: Don't be afraid to express vulnerability (as long as it's genuine)

   • Critical Success Factor: Candor

   Stage #2: Middle

   • Discuss the issue, probing for the wants/needs of the other person and then clearly stating your own wants/needs

   • Hint: Always start with the other person's agenda, and then move towards your agenda (pull them in, don't push)

   • Critical Success Factor: Clarity

   Stage 3: Closing

   • Nail down the next steps and make sure that you (and the other person) got what they wanted out of the conversation

- Hint: Be explicit with respect to "to do's"
- Critical Success Factor: Commitment

III. MEASURING POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

There are three outcomes of a Powerful Conversation

1. Advancement of agendas

2. Shared learning(s)

3. A stronger relationship(s)

You can track the impact of your Powerful Conversation by using these measurements and a matrix similar to the one set forth below:

Shared Learning

5
4
3
2
1

Strengthened Relationship   Advanced Agenda
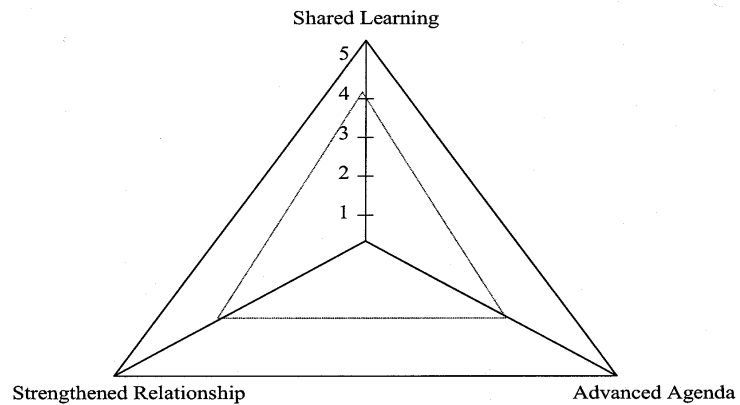
Alternatively, you can determine whether there has been a two-way Powerful Conversation by employing a series of simple questions such as:

ADVANCED AGENDAS

- Ask Yourself: Did I get what I needed?
- Ask the Other Person: Did you get what you needed?

SHARED LEARNING

- Ask Yourself: Did I learn something?
- Ask the Other Person: Did you learn something?

STRONGER RELATIONSHIP

- Ask Yourself: Do I feel that our relationship is stronger?

• Ask the Other Person: Do you feel that our relationship is stronger?

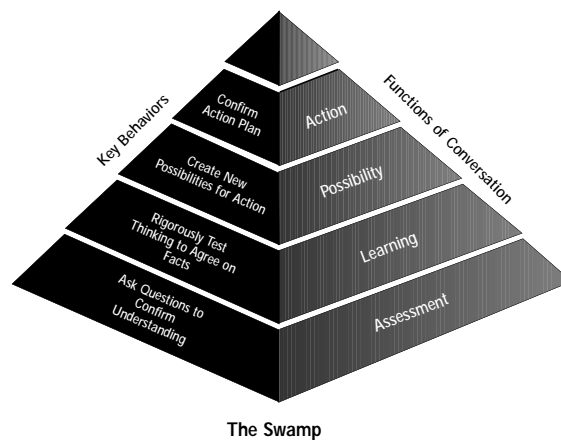Naturally, you should state the questions above in your own language and in your own communication style. However you ask them, make sure that you get the information that reveals whether a Powerful Conversation has taken place.

Tool #2

The Tower Of Power

In Chapter 2, we discussed at length how you can use the Tower of Power to structure your Powerful Conversations. The pages that follow set forth The Tower and provide some potential uses, rules of progression, and helpful hints.

I.   THE TOWER OF POWER

Key Behaviors

Confirm Action Plan

Create New Possibilities for Action

Rigorously Test Thinking to Agree on Facts

Ask Questions to Confirm Understanding

Functions of Conversation

Action

Possibility

Learning

Assessment

The Swamp

II. POTENTIAL USES OF THE TOWER OF POWER

There are four primary ways that you can use The Tower of Power in regard to Powerful Conversations:

1.   You can use The Tower to prepare for your Powerful Conversations

2.   You can use The Tower to conduct your Powerful Conversations

3.   You can use The Tower as a tool in coaching interactions

4.   You can use The Tower as a diagnostic instrument to observe the conversations of others

III. RULES OF PROGRESSION FOR THE TOWER OF POWER

Step #1 – What's Up?

- Start by asking "What's going on?", "What's wrong?," or "What's up?"
- Get agreement on issue and basic contours of that issue

Step #2 – What's So?

- Spend time unearthing the key facts, as well as the underlying assumptions driving those facts
- Get agreement on facts and assumptions before moving to Step #3

Step #3 – What's Possible?

- Review at least 2-4 opportunities/options/possibilities for action
- Confirm whether the option that you choose "takes us where we need to go" (if it does not, return to Step #2 to get back on track)
- Get agreement on option before moving to Step #4

Step #4 – Let's Go!

- Identify and discuss action steps
- Say specifically, "Did you get what you needed? Are you okay with what we decided? How do you feel about the process and the outcome?"
- Confirm -- and reconfirm -- commitments made

IV. HELPFUL HINTS FOR USING THE TOWER OF POWER

- Keep in mind The Tower is particularly valuable with respect to difficult conversations (see Chapter 5) -- it can help you prepare for those conversations, as well as guide you through them
- Never skip a step in The Tower (e.g., don't go from Step #1 to Step #3, or Step #2 to Step #4)
- Make sure that you have the necessary agreement before you proceed to the next step
- Return to a step if necessary (e.g., in Step #3, if it is clear that some assumptions are not yet on the table, return to Step #2)
- Be on the alert for "hidden dialogue" (i.e., inner beliefs or opinions that remain unstated) that might obviate the agreements that you have reached -- and seek to uncover that hidden dialogue so that you can get real agreement
- Reiterate the commitments in Step #4 -- and make them explicit
- Listen throughout

Tool #3

The Trust Tool

We addressed the subject of "Powerful Conversations and Trust." This tool will help you continue to work through this critical issue. In particular, it contains three parts: (i) a model indicating the "Drivers of Trust," as captured in the Say/Do Relationship, (ii) a model indicating the "Dimensions of Trust," as captured by The Four C's, and (iii) a model indicating the "Levels of Trust." All three of these models are explained in more depth in the text of the book. Taken together, they provide a new way of looking at trust and its relationship to leadership.

I.   THE DRIVERS OF TRUST: THE SAY/DO RELATIONSHIP
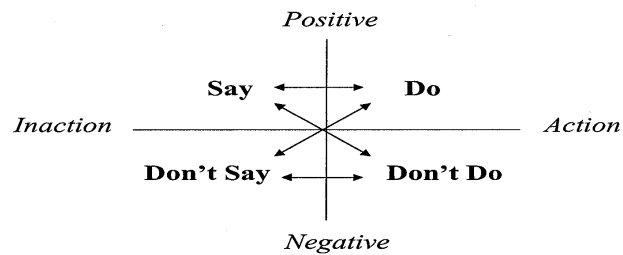
- The horizontal lines in the diagram above represent how leaders can build and maintain trust -- by doing what they say they will do and by not doing something that they didn't announce.

- The diagonals, on the other hand, represent where leaders can run into trouble in terms of trust -- when they don't do something that they said they would do, or when they do something that they didn't announce.

II. THE DIMENSIONS OF TRUST: THE FOUR C'S
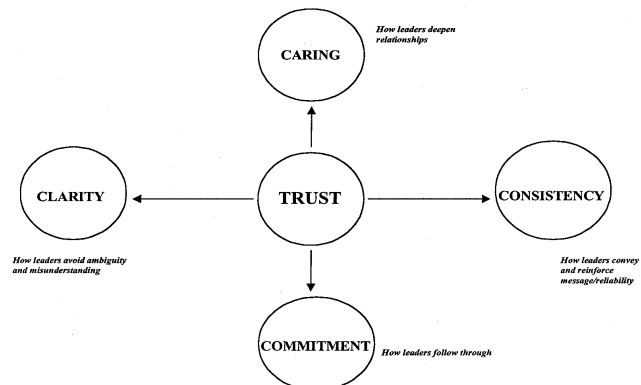
III. THE LEVELS OF TRUST

In what level does your relationship with another person (or your organization in general) reside? Use the indicia below to find out.
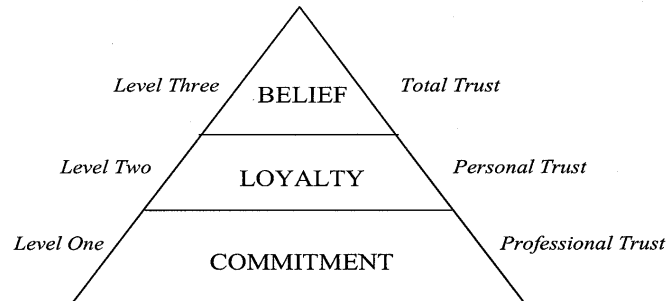
Level One: Begins with Commitment

We Consistently …
- Listen To "Real Requests"
- Clarify – Ask Specific Questions
- Verify Exact Deliverables
- Check-in On Expectations

We Don't Ever …
- "Sort-of" Agree
- Assume The Message
- Take Requests Lightly
- Ignore Commitments

Level Two: Focuses on Relationship

We Consistently …
- Demonstrate Caring

- Give Credit

- Warn/Advise

- Defend/Uphold
- Spend Time

We Don't Ever …
- Have Damaging Emotional Outbursts
- Save Self At The Expense Of Another
- Take On Another In Public Rr Behind Their Backs
- Pass On A Rumor

Level Three: Targets Principles/Values

We Conviction, We …
- State/Share Beliefs
- Live Shared Principles
- Learn/Accept Others
- Admit Mistakes

We Don't Ever …
- Lie (Even Fib)
- Plagiarize
- Talk North/Go South
- Compromise On Principles

Question sheet

Use this form to write your question for Phil Harkins or for discussion among your colleagues. Please write clearly.

Name (optional) ———————————————————————————————————

Organization ———————————————————————————————————

Location ———————————————————————————————————

Your question (25 words or less):

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Tel   617-692-5641

Fax   617-476-1041

Email   mgmtdevelopment@linkage-inc.com

Question sheet

Use this form to write your question for Phil Harkins or for discussion among your colleagues. Please write clearly.

Name (optional) ———————————————————————————————————

Organization ———————————————————————————————————

Location ———————————————————————————————————

Your question (25 words or less):

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Tel   617-692-5641

Fax   617-476-1041

Email   mgmtdevelopment@linkage-inc.com

LINKAGE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE SERIES EVALUATION FORM
SESSION I: PHIL HARKINS - LEADERSHIP

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR SITE COORDINATOR OR FAX TO 781-862-2355.

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Phone _____ Email _____

• **Please indicate functional area (only check one):**
  ❏ Finance ❏ Human Resources ❏ Manufacturing/Operations ❏ Marketing ❏ R&D ❏ Sales ❏ Other (specify)_____

• **How many people do you have reporting to you (include all levels)?** Number: _____

• **Please indicate your job level (only check one):**
  ❏ President or Officer   ❏ Vice President or Director   ❏ Manager/Supervisor   ❏ Team Leader   ❏ Sales Rep.
  ❏ Customer Service Rep.   ❏ HR, T&D, OD Practitioner   ❏ Other: _____

1) **Please indicate a rating for each of the following evaluation criteria by checking the appropriate box.**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Length of presentation	❏	❏	❏	❏
Effective presenter	❏	❏	❏	❏
Useful participant materials	❏	❏	❏	❏
Current important topic	❏	❏	❏	❏
Useful question and answer	❏	❏	❏	❏
Live (versus taped) broadcast important	❏	❏	❏	❏
Other_____	❏	❏	❏	❏

2) **Please give a general overall comment about the program:** _____

_____

_____

3) **May Linkage use this comment for promotional purposes (including name and organization)?** ❏ YES   ❏ NO

4) **On a scale of 1-10 (10 = Outstanding), how would you rate this satellite broadcast session? Rating:** _____

5) **How did you hear about this presentation (please check all that apply)?**
  ❏ Email message   ❏ Self-mailing brochure   ❏ Bulletin board poster   ❏ Press release   ❏ Colleague
  ❏ Phone Call   ❏ Advertisement in:_____   ❏ Other: _____

6) **How many viewers would you estimate attended this event (in the room with you)? Number:** _____

7) **Which technology do you prefer to view these types of programs?**
  ❏ Satellite (open room)   ❏ Web-casting (desktop viewing)   ❏ Taped video   ❏ Other: _____

8) **Please indicate the topics you would like to see via satellite/web-casting (check all that apply):**
  ❏ Coaching   ❏ Creativity   ❏ Performance Appraisal   ❏ Interviewing   ❏ Leadership
  ❏ Project Mgmt.   ❏ Negotiation   ❏ Strategic Selling   ❏ Presentation Skills   ❏ E-Commerce
  ❏ Other: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR SITE COORDINATOR OR FAX TO 781-862-2355.

Leadership Assessment Instrument™

Please complete before the program

About the Leadership Assessment Instrument™

The Leadership Assessment Instrument™ (LAI) was researched and developed by Linkage, Inc., in partnership with Dr. Warren Bennis. It focuses on the five personal characteristics, or competencies, essential to effective leadership and on the five skills with which leaders put these competencies into practice. Knowing your strengths and opportunities for development may help make today's presentation particularly relevant.

The five categories the instrument assesses are:

1. Focused drive,
2. Emotional intelligence,
3. Building trust/enabling others,
4. Conceptual thinking, and
5. Systems thinking.

Each competency and each skill has a definition and an associated set of behaviors that demonstrate that competency or skill. Additionally, each competency is described by ten of these behaviors and each skill by five. Furthermore, the ten behaviors for each competency are organized into two groups of five, each corresponding to a component of that competency.

Let's take a closer look at the five competency categories in greater detail.

Focused Drive

The competency of focusing on a goal and harnessing your energy in order to meet that goal—a balance between the components of:

■ Focus: The ability to identify an important goal or vision and to channel efforts at specific targets that support that goal or vision.

■ Drive: The ability to persevere, sacrifice (when necessary), and expend high degrees of energy to reach high levels of performance.

Emotional Intelligence

The competency of understanding and mastering your emotions (and those of others) in a way that instills confidence, motivates, inspires, and enhances group effectiveness—a balance between the components of:

■ Perception: The ability to read the emotions and thoughts of others through the use of insight and analytical skills.

■ Emotional Maturity: The ability to master emotions and cope with stress in a way that instills confidence, motivates, and enhances group effectiveness.

Trusted Influence

The competency of evoking trust from others and placing trust in others enabling them to succeed—a balance between the components of:

■ Commitment: The ability to evoke trust from others by keeping commitments, adhering to high ethical standards and principles, and building shared goals or values.

■ Empowerment: The ability to help others reach higher levels of performance through trust, delegation, participation, and coaching.

Conceptual Thinking

The competency of conceiving and selecting innovative strategies and ideas for your organization—a balance of the components of:

■ Innovation: The ability to create/enhance ideas, products, and services that lead to bottom-line success.

■ Big-Picture Thinking: The ability to see all of the forces, events, entities, and people that are affecting (or are being affected by) the situation at hand.

Systems Thinking

The competency of rigorously and systematically connecting processes, events and systems—a balance between the components of:

■ Mental Discipline: The ability to sort through ambiguity and alternatives in a way that crystallizes and puts ideas into action.

■ Process Orientation: The ability to increase overall learning and performance by designing, implementing, and/or connecting processes.

While today's program is most relevant to conceptual thinking, having an awareness of your rating in each area provides insight and may make today's program more meaningful. Instructions for completing and scoring the assessment are provided on the following pages.

Leadership Self-Assessment

Purpose and overview

The purpose of this Leadership Self-Assessment is to provide a leadership profile based on the competencies necessary for strong, superior leadership. The data that you provide will enable you to construct a profile, complete with areas of strength and areas for future development.

Please complete the instrument by assessing your own behaviors and skills according to the directions below. Be honest—the more rigorous you are, the better you can target your developmental needs. Remember, the instrument is meant to assess how you believe that you actually are; not how you think that you should be.

Directions

For each of the 50 items listed on the following pages, consider how much the stated behavior characterizes your own behaviors, thoughts, intentions, or skills in on-the-job situations, and then rate yourself in the space provided according to the following scale:

    3 = I often demonstrate this behavior

    2 = I sometimes demonstrate this behavior

    1 = I hardly ever demonstrate this behavior

Use the enclosed answer sheet (page 69) to record your answers. After recording your answers, add up the totals for each competency on page 69 and then transfer the overall competency scores to the competency profile sheet on page 70.

Leadership Self-Assessment

1. I balance multiple tasks and prioritize when faced with limited time and/or resources.

2. I create a positive environment—even when it appears "all is lost"—by expressing optimism and offering encouragement to team members.

3. I keep a mental record of every commitment that I make and follow through on my promises.

4. I steer through ambiguity and "information clutter" to resolve complex problems.

5. I ask questions to try to piece together "unrelated" information, events, etc.

6. I build momentum by spending 90 percent of my time on the top 10 percent of my priority list.

7. I view my "wins" with pride and humility.

8. I operate by a value-driven work philosophy that is grounded on clear principles.

9. I adhere to a disciplined process for sorting out alternatives and arriving at the best option when approaching a problem or project.

10. I make connections between and among information, events, etc. that reveal key issues, problems, or opportunities.

11. I display single-mindedness in unstoppably directing my energy at specific targets.

12. I persuasively and effectively reassure teams and/or individuals in the face of setbacks or seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

13. I identify and find ways to meet the needs, expectations, and wants of others up, down, and across the organization.

14. I test ideas and assumptions by carefully reviewing ideas with thought leaders and critical thinkers within my organization.

15. I do not accept a problem at face value, but search for the less obvious underlying factors driving the problem.

16. I find a way to "get it done" and will sacrifice personally to reach the goal line.

17. I have a thorough understanding of my own emotions and feelings and how they impact the situation at hand.

18. I give people a sense of personal fulfillment by recognizing their individual contributions in the achievement of a goal.

Leadership Self-Assessment continued

19.   I consult outside resources (e.g., magazines, and databases) in order to identify where my company, my industry, and the market are moving and to size up new business opportunities.

20.   I take into account the potential implications of a decision on other people/departments within the organization before moving forward.

21.   I stay the course mentally despite potential distractions and disruptions to my primary focus.

22.   I control and selectively display my emotions and feelings in a beneficial way (e.g., I successfully channel my anger).

23.   I help build shared goals and values to reinforce individual commitment to the organization.

24.   I create viable new business ideas by thinking "out of the box," as well as in a sound business fashion.

25.   I build and connect processes within my organization to assure that implementation remains constant and reliable.

26.   I display stamina, energy, and intensity in achieving high standards of performance.

27.   I express myself in consistent moods that invite participation and further communication with others.

28.   I provide honest, clear feedback by focusing on the issue (and not the person) so that the person will accept and consider the feedback.

29.   I ask "What if?" questions and play out scenarios to test new business ideas that challenge the status quo.

30.   I assure that new ideas are integrated with established procedures/processes so that the organization can digest the new ideas.

31.   I act decisively, with a passion for making things happen.

32.   I recognize and consider the emotions and feelings of others before taking action.

33.   I articulate a goal or vision and motivate others to help me reach that goal/vision.

34.   I have the ability to create unorthodox or revolutionary concepts that have growth or profit potential.

35.   I create synergy by involving the "right people" in all phases of work design and operational implementation.

Leadership Self-Assessment continued

36. I demonstrate boldness in striving for ambitious goals rather than settling for the safety of achievable results.

37. I treat different people differently, with appropriate amounts of candor and sensitivity depending on each individual's own unique makeup.

38. I create shared responsibility among team members by building participation in decision making and delegating key tasks/functions.

39. I take the time to check whether a new idea is feasible before proceeding.

40. I pull together disparate ideas to create clear themes and pathways that may alleviate the confusion and anxiety of others.

41. I seek—and find—creative solutions to obstacles blocking the path to the goal line.

42. I accept rejection with grace and renewed determination, modeling to others how to handle failure.

43. I display trust in others by giving them additional responsibilities—and providing them with the appropriate tools and resources necessary to carry those responsibilities out.

44. I seek better solutions to problems instead of falling back on established protocol.

45. I demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning by documenting critically important action steps, i.e., I try to make sure that my organization does not "reinvent the wheel."

46. I effectively communicate the critical nature of the goal in a way that allows others to focus on that goal, as well.

47. I offer solutions, suggestions, and constructive criticism to others while also remaining open to additional possibilities.

48. I successfully help individuals and teams reach higher levels of performance, e.g., by displaying confidence in them at critical junctures.

49. I act receptive to the new ideas of others and try to improve or enhance them in a non-threatening manner.

50. I see an entity (e.g., my organization) not merely as a collection of isolated processes and parts, but as a unitary whole of interconnected processes.

Leadership Self-Assessment answer sheet

Focused Drive	Emotional Intelligence	Building Trust/ Enabling Others	Conceptual Thinking	Systems Thinking
1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
6. _____	7. _____	8. _____	9. _____	10. _____
11. _____	12. _____	13. _____	14. _____	15. _____
16. _____	17. _____	18. _____	19. _____	20. _____
21. _____	22. _____	23. _____	24. _____	25. _____
26. _____	27. _____	28. _____	29. _____	30. _____
31. _____	32. _____	33. _____	34. _____	35. _____
36. _____	37. _____	38. _____	39. _____	40. _____
41. _____	42. _____	43. _____	44. _____	45. _____
46. _____	47. _____	48. _____	49. _____	50. _____

TOTALS:

_____   _____   _____   _____   _____

Individual Development Planning:

Leadership Competencies

Competency Profile Sheet

1. Transfer your overall competency scores from the answer sheet to the corresponding boxes below.
2. Plot points on the graph using the scale on the left.
3. Connect the dots to see your overall competency profile.

	30					
Absolute Strength						
Relative Strength	25					
Possible Development Area	20					
Development Area	15					
Possible Block	10					
Competency Scores:						
		Focused Drive	Emotional Intelligence	Building Trust/ Enabling Others	Conceptual Thinking	Systems Thinking